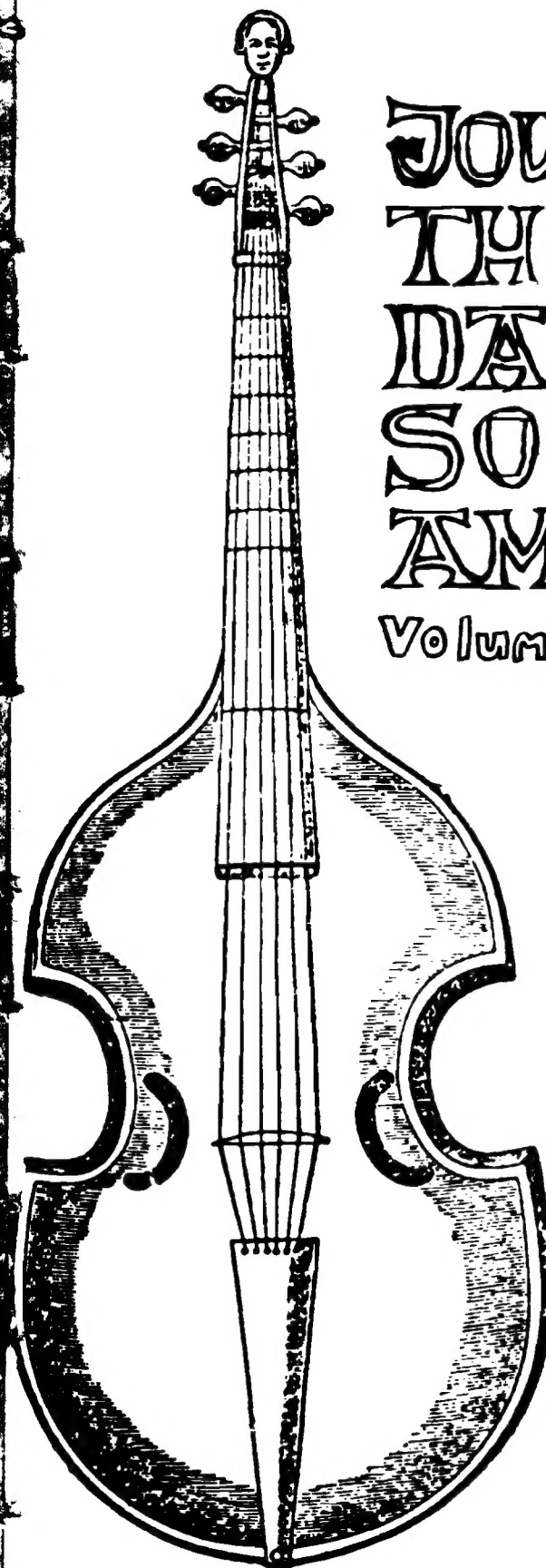


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KARL FRIEDRICH ABEL

Charles Jean Robineau  
(Flourished mid-18th century, Paris)  
Royal Collection, Hampton Court  
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## Karl Friedrich Abel—Some Contemporary Impressions

SARAH JOINER WYNN

To Karl Friedrich Abel, the great viola da gamba virtuoso and composer and long-time resident in London until his death in 1787, is probably due much of the credit for maintaining interest in the viola da gamba as a principal solo instrument and as a member of ensembles in England until the latter part of the eighteenth century. The decline in the popularity of this last survivor of the viol family, foreshadowed by the 1750's, may be attributed in some measure to contemporary response to the tonal character of the instrument itself. Thomas Busby, music historian, complained that the "thin" and "wiry" tones were difficult to "render attractive" and scarcely to be endured,<sup>1</sup> and Charles Burney noted that the "greatest skill and refinement" were required to make the instrument's tones "bearable."<sup>2</sup> Such "skill and refinement" were united in the person of Abel, whose dedication and genius brought the long colorful history of the instrument to a splendid close.

Abel, born in Cothen in 1723, arrived in London in 1759, and with his high degree of musical competence augmented the already vigorous artistic life of the city. Blessed with early tutelage from his father and Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig and equipped with extensive experience gained in various musical centers in Germany, he quickly established himself in his new abode as a musician of unusual skill with particular fame as a player of the viola da gamba. He was soon appointed chamber musician to Queen Charlotte. At various times he was principal composer for numerous musical organizations in the city, including the Hanover Square Professional Concerts which were founded in 1785. His close friend Johann Christian Bach arrived in London in

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Busby, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Time to the Present*, Comprising the Lives of Eminent Composers and Musical Writers (2 vols.; London: Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria Lane and Simpkin and Marshall, Stationers' Court, 1819; New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), II, 517.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (1789), new edition with Critical and Historical Notes by Frank Mercer (2 vols.; London: Foulis; New York: Harcourt, 1935; New York: Dover Publications, 1957), II, 1020.

the fall of 1762, and on January 23, 1763, the two instrumentalists gave the first of their joint concerts, a series which continued until Bach's death in 1783. After the loss of his friend, Abel returned to Germany where he remained for two years, but by January 1785, he was again in London.

January 1785 was significant not only for Abel's return to the British concert halls, but also for the launching of a new and powerful newspaper, the *Daily Universal Register* (later called *The Times*), its initial edition appearing on January 1. Consistently an ardent supporter of musical activities in the city, this young and energetic daily paper carried for the first time a column entitled "Musical Intelligence" on January 11. In this account of musical activities is found the first of many references to Abel made by *The Times*—references found in announcements of programs and concerts, reviews of performances, and in green-room gossip columns. The announcement of the program "lately held at the Duke of Queensberry's" was typically lacking in distinctions between composer and performer and sparse in particularity of detail. "Eminent professors" presented this private concert which was as follows:

Concerto, violin, Mr. Lolli  
 Concerto, viol de gambo, Mr. Abel  
 Concerto, harpsichord, Mr. Schroeter  
 Concerto, violin, Mr. Cramer  
 Concerto, violin, Mr. Salomon  
 Concerto, oboe, Mr. Parke  
 Quartetto, in which Mr. Salomon led  
 Solo, on the violin, Mr. Lolli  
 Overture.<sup>3</sup>

No review of this presentation was printed, but in the following week the "Musical Intelligence" carried an account of the "grand concert at Lord Brudenell's at which were present his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the foreign Ambassadors, and many of the nobility." The reviewer wrote: "Abel was perfection."<sup>4</sup>

This reaction to Abel's performance is typical of the high

<sup>3</sup>*Daily Universal Register* (later *The Times*), January 11, 1785; p. 3, c. 4. Further references to items in the newspaper will be cited in notes as *The Times*.

<sup>4</sup>*The Times*, January 17, 1785; p. 3, c. 4.

esteem in which his extraordinary ability was held. Other contemporary sources support this regard. W. T. Parke, the eminent oboist, paid frequent tribute to Abel in his *Memoirs*, commending his inimitable performance.<sup>5</sup> Parke, recalling Abel's playing for the first Professional Concert at Hanover Square on February 2, 1785, noted that he "performed a solo on the viol di gamba with his accustomed elegance and sensibility."<sup>6</sup> Gerber spoke of "the greatness of his talent, his wonderful power of expression, the richness of his tones, and his stirring execution on the gamba."<sup>7</sup> In its tribute upon Abel's death in 1787, the *London Chronicle* declared his "great musical ability . . . an honour to the age in which he lived" and observed: "As to the Viol di Gamba, the instrument is now lost."<sup>8</sup>

Abel's command of his instrument was described as having been distinguished by several characteristics which regularly caught the attention of his hearers: his "hand" which "no difficulties could embarrass," his taste which was "most refined and delicate," his judgment "so correct and certain as never to let a single note escape without meaning."<sup>9</sup> The critic for the *Gentleman's Magazine* thought that "no person ever touched that instrument with sweeter effect or taste,"<sup>10</sup> and Busby recalled Abel's "always pleasing and frequently learned modulation"<sup>11</sup>—presumably modulation of tone in expressive phrasing. "His taste and knowledge," Gerber said, "especially made him the umpire on all contested points. . . ." <sup>12</sup> Abel's particular excellence in playing an adagio frequently elicited such comments as these made by Gerber: "On his first appearance in London, his discretion, his taste, and his pathetic manner of expression in the rendering of his adagios so captivated the young virtuosi that they very soon followed his school with less expendi-

<sup>5</sup>W. T. Parke, *Musical Memoirs* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), I, 62.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 53.

<sup>7</sup>Ernst Ludwig Gerber, quoted by Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *The Violoncello and Its History* (London and New York: Novello, Ewer and Co., 1894; New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup>*London Chronicle*, June 30, 1787; p. 3, c. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Burney, II, 1019.

<sup>10</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine*, 57 (1787), Pt. 1, p. 549.

<sup>11</sup>Busby, II, 517.

<sup>12</sup>Gerber, quoted by Wasielewski, p. 33.

ture of notes and with more successful result."<sup>13</sup> Burney, equally impressed, wrote: "... in nothing was he so superior to himself, and to other musicians, as in writing and playing an *adagio*; in which the most pleasing, yet learned modulation; the richest harmony; and the most elegant and polished melody were all expressed with such feeling, taste, and science, that no musical production or performance with which I was then [1779]acquainted seemed to approach nearer perfection."<sup>14</sup> The writer for the *European Magazine*, assessing his performing abilities as "truly excellent," was convinced that "no modern has been heard to play an *adagio* with greater taste and feeling than Mr. Abel."<sup>15</sup>

At a time when the popularity of solo instrumental and orchestral music was reaching new heights, opportunities for hearing music in London by such eminent composers as Haydn, Mozart, Bach, Stamitz, and Clementi were many. From a study of programs presented throughout the city and a review of the critics' reactions, it is apparent that Abel's niche as a composer for the gamba and as a modern symphonist was as assured as was his position as an instrumentalist in the London music scene. Indicative of his appeal as a composer is the frequency with which his music appeared on programs printed in *The Times* from 1785 until his death in May, 1787. During this relatively brief period, his music was performed on no fewer than twenty-four occasions. Many concerts began with an Abel "Full Piece"—probably an entire symphony, although in journalistic writing of the day musical terms such as symphony and overture and full piece sometimes were inconsistently applied. Hanover Square Professional Concerts frequently opened their first or second "act" with a "Symphony" or an "Overture" of his.

Critics almost without exception praised Abel's compositions. His overtures, quartets, concertantes, and symphonies were acclaimed for their originality, richness of style, their beauty and grandeur. A *Times* columnist, writing on June 23 shortly after Abel's death, noted that "Sensibility is the prevailing and beautiful characteristic of his compositions." One writer for the

*London Chronicle* recalled that Abel's "*forte* was the pathetic" and commended the "rich vein of melody [which] runs through all his *andante* movements."<sup>16</sup> Earlier, another reporter for the same paper had called attention to "the subjects of his movements, and the elegant combinations of his harmony..."<sup>17</sup> The *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* reflected similar praise, adding that his genius "must ever be attended with admiration."<sup>18</sup> Almost a decade after Abel's death, the *Monthly Magazine and British Register* reminded its readers that Abel's works abounded "with expression, with fine and pleasing (though sometimes abstruse) modulation, and with accuracy of composition."<sup>19</sup> Burney particularly commended Abel's "musical science in harmony, modulation, fugue, and canon..." Of his last quartets, Burney remarked that they constituted a "specimen of his science and care in the composition and arrangement of the parts... [which were] in point of harmony and selection of sounds, models of perfection..." Abel's compositions, he said, were "easy and elegantly simple." Abel's own words seem to suggest a key to this musical desideratum: "I do not chuse to be always struggling with difficulties, and playing with all my might."<sup>20</sup>

Some critics did, however, question the spirit and vitality of Abel's work. According to the writer for the *European Magazine*, who noted "a uniformity... through all his works," Abel's "sweet and flowing" music was "seldom spirited and great."<sup>21</sup> Even Burney could observe: "As his invention was not unbounded, and his exquisite taste and deep science prevented the admission of whatever was not highly polished, there seemed in some of his last productions a languor and monotony..."<sup>22</sup>

Abel's patrons and friends included members of the royalty and nobility, musicians, composers, journalists, historians, dramatists, and artists. One of his most valued friendships was with

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>14</sup>Burney, II, 1019.

<sup>15</sup>*European Magazine*, May 1784, p. 366.

<sup>16</sup>*London Chronicle*, October 12, 1787; p. 356, c. 3.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, June 21, 1787; p. 592, c. 3.

<sup>18</sup>*Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, June 1787, p. 311.

<sup>19</sup>*Monthly Magazine and British Register*, December 1796 (Supplement), pp. 981-986.

<sup>20</sup>Burney, II, 1019-1020.

<sup>21</sup>*European Magazine*, May 1784, p. 366.

<sup>22</sup>Burney, II, 1020.



Thomas Gainsborough who painted two portraits of his friend, one of which hangs in the Huntington Library.<sup>23</sup> While Gainsborough's profession was painting, he had a life-long passion for music, and, according to William Jackson of Exeter, "flirted with" many instruments including the hautboy and violin, but each visit with Abel "brought him back to the viola da gamba."<sup>24</sup> Abel's apartment walls were covered with Gainsborough's pictures, an "exchange for the notes of his *viol-di-gamba*," as Henry Angelo recorded in his *Reminiscences*. A "tall, portly person" with a "dry humour," according to Angelo, Abel seems to have been warmly regarded by all who knew him.<sup>25</sup> Sainsbury recalled that Abel "kept on tolerable terms with society, though a natural irascibility and disposition to say strong things, sometimes rendered him overbearing and insolent in company."<sup>26</sup> Even so, while he was known to lose his temper when pressed, he was admired for his affability and generosity. William Jackson called him "the prince of musicians." When Abel died, his friend Gainsborough wrote eloquently to Henry Bate: "We love a genius for what he leaves and we mourn him for what he takes away. . . . For my part, I shall never cease looking up to heaven . . . in hopes of getting one more glance of the man I loved from the moment I heard him touch the string. . . ."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup>The informal portrait painted by the French artist, Charles Jean Robineau, and reproduced as the frontispiece, is in sharp contrast to Gainsborough's which shows Abel in powdered wig and formal court dress with his viola da gamba.

<sup>24</sup>William Jackson, *The Four Ages, Together with Essays on Various Subjects* (London: Printed for Cadell and Davies, 1798; New York, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1970), pp. 148-151.

<sup>25</sup>Henry Angelo, *The Reminiscences of Henry Angelo* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830; 2 vols.; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), I, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup>John Sainsbury, *A Dictionary of Musicians From the Earliest Times* (2 vols.; London: n.p., 1825; New York: Da Capo Press, 1966), I, 2.

<sup>27</sup>From a letter written June 20, 1787. Mary Woodall, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough* (London: Lion and Unicorn Press at the Royal College of Art, 1961; Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1963), p. 31.

## Hubert Le Blanc's *Défense de la viole*<sup>a</sup>

Translation by BARBARA GARVEY JACKSON

All that is known with certainty about Hubert Le Blanc is that he was a Doctor of Law and an *abbé*; the first we know from his title page, the second from a reference to him in Michel Corrette's *Viole d'Orphée* (1780). He must have been a colorful and eccentric personality, for a sort of Don Quixote spirit shines through his writings. His German translator, Albert Erhard, speculates that he must have been "a somewhat sarcastic old gentleman," and the pamphlet indicates that he was old enough for his taste to have been formed sometime between 1690 and 1710. According to Fétis, he could not find a Paris publisher for his book and had to publish it in Amsterdam. When news reached him that Mortier would print it, he was supposed to have been "so transported with joy that he left for Holland in the state he was in when the news reached him, that is to say in *robe de chambre*—pantaloons and night cap." <sup>b</sup>

Whatever his oddities as a person, the little treatise is a valuable source of information about musical life and opinion in Paris in the early eighteenth century. It contains a good deal of information about performance practice, particularly differences in the handling of the viol and the violin family. He was very much concerned about what he viewed as a great decline of aristocratic amateur players who were seriously devoted to fine playing, and he was distressed by the rise of professional performances in large halls. He defended the viol ardently against the violin, but he was nevertheless very much drawn to the best in the Italian style, unFrench though it might be. He deplored what he saw as laziness and superficiality on the French side as unmercifully as he attacked the inundation of French music by Italian sonatas.

His style of writing, as is typical of his time, is full of mythological and historical allusions, often illuminating but frequently merely literary garnishes. His choice of allusions as well

<sup>a</sup>Hubert Le Blanc, *Défense de la basse de viole contre les entreprises du violon et les prétentions du violoncel* (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1740), reprinted in *La Revue musicale*, IX (1927-28), 1, pp. 43-56, pp. 136-142, pp. 247-251; 2, pp. 21-25, pp. 138-142; 3, pp. 187-192.

<sup>b</sup>Francois Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle*, XV, p. 238.

as his sometimes violently angry language display a pugnacious spirit tempered with wit.

There have been two modern editions of Le Blanc. The first was published serially in *La Revue musicale* (1927-28); the second is a German translation with short commentary by Albert Erhard.<sup>c</sup> The German translation is considerably abridged, principally through the omission of mythological and historical allusions. Some other more important sections, such as discussion about LeClair's use of double-stops and the tuning of keyboard instruments, were also omitted or shortened in this abridgement.

Though many of his analogies and allusions are indeed dispensable, even those which are more decorative than informative shed light on his attitudes, and the charm of his eccentricities would be diminished by omitting them. I have tried, therefore, in this translation to explain and clarify as many of these references as possible.

The advice and assistance of Drs. Kern Jackson and Rosa Bartsch are gratefully acknowledged.

### **Defense of the Viola da Gamba Against the Enterprises of the Violin and the Pretensions of the Violoncello**

by M. HUBERT LE BLANC, Doctor of Law  
Amsterdam, Pierre Mortier, 1740

To His Excellency, Monseigneur Jean-Frédéric Phelipeaux,<sup>1</sup>  
Count of Maurepas, Minister of State, Councillor of the King  
in all his Councils, Secretary of State having under his com-  
mand the Department of the Admiralty, Commander of the  
Orders of His Most Christian Majesty

Monseigneur,

The welcome given by Your Grace to the Muses persuades

---

<sup>c</sup>Hubert Le Blanc, *Verteidigung der Viola da Gamba gegen die Angriffe der Violine und die Anmassung des Violoncells*, trans. Albert Erhard, (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1951, 2nd edition, 1959).

<sup>1</sup>Jean-Frédéric Phelipeaux (1701-1781) was an able administrator of the Admiralty from 1723 to 1749, when a personal quarrel with Madame de Pompadour led to his disgrace. He was, however, recalled to be a chief confidential advisor to the King in 1774. Le Blanc's connection with Phelipeaux is not known.

the Muse of Harmony to put the interests of the viola da gamba in your hands. She takes the liberty of addressing to you the defense of its rights which she now puts forward. For the great advantage of your protection, alas, she can only offer, by the sweetness of her chords, to contribute to your relaxation from the cares and wearinesses which the affairs of State cost you. How can the viol be so bold as to seek to draw near to Your Grace, if not in imitation of the People, who in return for the many benefits with which the King Louis XV overwhelms them, have only given him their praises and did not ask permission to praise him.

I am, with very profound respect,

Monseigneur,

The very humble and very obedient servant of  
Your Excellency.

Hubert LE BLANC

### **FIRST PART Dissertation on *Pièces* and Sonatas**

The Divine Intelligence, among its many gifts, has divided up the gift of Harmony among mortals. The violin was allotted to the Italians, the flute to the Germans, the harpsichord to the English and the viola da gamba to the French.

Marais senior<sup>2</sup> was so skilled in his *genre* and had a style of composition which was so pure and performance so refined (reduced to rules which he never violated), that he withstood the onslaught delivered against France by the Romans, the Venetians, the Florentines, and the Neapolitans in private concerts, like an Ajax of music on this side of the mountains.

---

<sup>2</sup>Marin Marais (1656-1728) was, in Le Blanc's view, the greatest of all players of the viola da gamba. He was a great virtuoso, teacher, and composer, and his compositions included not only the *pièces* for viol of which Le Blanc speaks so much, but also operas and trios for violin, flute and viola da gamba and for violin, viola da gamba, and harpsichord. The trios are conveniently ignored by Le Blanc. His 19 children included four gambists, of whom the most distinguished was Roland (praised by Quantz in 1726). He was still alive and active when Le Blanc wrote, having published two volumes of *pièces* for viol in 1735 and 1738, but Le Blanc never mentions him.



Monseigneur, the Duke of Orleans,<sup>3</sup> later Regent, honored the combats of French and Italian harmony with his presence and held the door himself, allowing only distinguished lovers of the art or the elite among the performers to enter, so that indeed Forcroi<sup>4</sup> senior thought himself very happy that His Royal Highness had no objection to his remaining outside.

Marais senior, Lully, Corelli, and M. Michel<sup>5</sup> are the quartet which has found the most melodious harmony. They form the antitheses, the quadratures, and the union of musical sound which bring together the most well-proportioned harmonies out of the atmosphere. From them they got a great effect with few notes, making parts of bronze vessels tremble and sonorous bodies vibrate, while other composers, with three times as many notes, make the ear buzz, which satisfies it less.

Marais senior was quite able to play his own *pièces* without being subject to nervousness, and was able to execute those of others, except for sonatas. He was regarded with singular veneration as being truly original in good composition and beautiful performance. Without being restricted he confined himself to his *pièces*, and he who possessed a wealth of harmony was not considered limited by the boundaries which he knew to be prescribed.

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<sup>3</sup>Phillip II, Duke of Orleans (1674-1723) was Regent during the minority of Louis XV from 1715 to 1723. He was a remarkably talented, though dissolute, man, whose great interest in music had been fostered by his studies with Charpentier. He played flute, encouraged concerts, and even wrote an opera himself which was performed privately at the Palais Royal.

<sup>4</sup>Antoine Forqueray (Paris, 1671-Nantes, 1745), was probably the greatest gambist still living at the time Le Blanc wrote. Le Blanc speaks highly of him elsewhere, but much preferred Marais as the true representative of the best French tradition. The implication here is that at these combats even the great Forqueray, though a member of the King's own *musique de chambre* (who had also been an important performer in Mme de Maintenon's concerts), had to be satisfied to be an outsider. Actually, Forqueray was connected with the Duke of Orleans' household, and is listed as an "ordinaire de musique du roi et de celle du duc d'Orléans" in the accounts of January 21, 1716. Marcelle Benoit and Norbert Dufourcq, "A propos de Forqueray," RMFC, VIII (1968), 229-241. Le Blanc's vivid picture of the artist listening at the keyhole appears to be fantasy.

<sup>5</sup>Lully and Corelli were the traditional representatives of the essence of French and Italian music, and both were considered the models for their respective styles of violin playing. Michel Mascitti (variously referred to by his contemporaries as Michel, Miquel, or Michelly) was a Neapolitan student of Corelli who came to Paris around 1704 and remained until his death at the age of 96 in 1760.

At the same time, if the viola da gamba had a fine support in the person of Marais senior, she also had a solid one in Forcroi senior. He felt very seriously that all the Galbavons,<sup>6</sup> with their infatuation for playing *pièces*, were very wrong not to follow the example of the lute, harp, guitar, and dulcimer, which were out of use. This example was enough for him to conclude that all those instruments which were restricted to *pièces* were the sort that go to the granary in peacetime, or on bed canopies, where they are (like fat folios in libraries) gathering dust very different from that on which lay the body of Achilles (overturned by a cowardly and miserable blow, which took from him none of his glory).

Having studied why the above-mentioned instruments had declined, Forcroi realized that one grows tired of being a pupil all his life. When ladies are married, they give up the harpsichord if they only know a few *pièces*; on the other hand, if they were taught the art of accompaniment while still young girls, marriage did not impede the continuation of the practice of music at all, and their competence even surpassed that of the best trained youths of Paris (when those only worked superficially, as is all too common among masters of the viola da gamba). Thus Mme la Marquise de Saint-Andre, Mlle de Montrivie from Grenoble, Mme la Comtesse d'Avelin from Lille, Mme Pigoust from Rouen, and Mlle Caze d'Aras<sup>7</sup> only acknowledge equal expertise among the gentlemen in such virtuosi as M. le Chevalier de Guigne on the flute, M. de Bellemont on the viol, the chief engineers, MM. Demoulceau and

---

<sup>6</sup>*Galbavons* refers to followers of the Roman Emperor Galba. The Praetorian Guard and the 6th Legion had helped bring him to power following the death of Nero. In Galba's name, the troupes were promised a sizable bonus as a bribe for their support, but on his accession to power, Galba refused to pay. The dissatisfaction of the troupes was so great that his support was undermined and within a year he was murdered. Le Blanc implies here that the players and instruments which played only *pièces* were lazy, wanted bread and bonuses for little effort, and gathered the dust of inactivity rather than the dust of battle.

<sup>7</sup>None of the ladies Le Blanc names can be identified with certainty, although the Marquise de Saint Andre may have been the mother of Charles Francois, Marquise Ihaon de Revel de Saint-Andre, a distinguished soldier from an illustrious old family, and Mlle Caze d'Aras may have been one of the daughters of Gaspard-Hyacinthe de Caze (Baron de Bove, Paris 1711-1750), though all except Thérèse-Henriette were married by 1740.

Chevalier, and M. Le Blanc<sup>8</sup> who could play shifts, that is to say, three transpositions outside the natural position.<sup>9</sup> This is like having four keyboards, on which one puts the fingers in completely different places to play the same notes.

They [the "Galbavons"] neglect to mention what Marais senior recommended for playing well—that is, practicing all difficult *pièces* every two weeks—and they embarked on an immense ocean of sonatas with sails unfurled, although he declaimed against it. And in spite of the couplets sung to their disadvantage by the Prima Donna from Grenoble, they confine themselves to that which is easiest and shortest, scorning profound knowledge rather than acquiring it. They give us an occasion to examine the sonata and see whether the jesting of Mme de C\*\*\* and the scorn attributed to Marais senior have a solid basis.

M. de Voltaire is right to propose that we have to recognize the Italians as our masters in many things. For can it be doubted when in their Galileo is seen a Christopher Columbus, the first navigator of the ethereal substance, founder and measurer of the great bodies which go forth amidst other grandeur than that of the Cyclades, to which Virgil compares the vessels of Actium.<sup>10</sup> Then one finds one of their physicians as the inventor of the thermometer, for testing the degree of a fever by that of the effervescence of the liquid, and that their climate has produced the Princes of Architecture—Michelangelo, Palladio, and Scamozzi; those of painting—Raphael, Titian, and Correggio. When one continues his path he feels himself stopped short, unable to go past, by Corelli (Quo me fessum rapis, Corelli, tu maximus ille es.)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Of these virtuosi, only Le Blanc can be identified with certainty, and his first name and dates are unknown. He was the principal violinist of the court of the Count de Clermont, where the celebrated flautist Michel Blavet was also employed. His best-known work was a programmatic piece, *La Chasse*, which was played for the King at Fontainebleau in 1708 and repeated at the concert *spirituel* between 1728 and 1734. No relation between the violinist Le Blanc and Hubert Le Blanc is known.

<sup>9</sup>Natural position is modern first position; the three other positions (transpositions) would presumably be second, third and fourth positions in modern terms.

<sup>10</sup>The Cyclades are a group of islands near Athens, clustered around the island of Syros.

<sup>11</sup>You who transport weary me with emotion, Corelli, you are the greatest one of all.

Did not the inventor of the sonata fulfill at one stroke all the best in instrumental music; even as Homer, in the past, found no imitators, he will find no one henceforth by whom he will be imitated.

To clarify what the merit of the sonata consists of, and consequently what it has excelled in, there are two very important remarks to make. The first is that in music, just as in discourse, there is a distinction to be made between poetry and prose. The second is the notable difference between harmony and melody. The Italians seek the one above all; the French sacrifice everything for the other.

The character of musical poetry is Melody. It is found in all French *pièces* for the viol and for the harpsichord.

The property of musical prose is harmony, without which the Sonata would merely be on a par with the low level of music of a children's choir.

Although Marais senior understood that as much could be done with sonatas as you wanted, you don't have to believe him any more than you do Virgil on the nature of the soul. A lucky genius is required to achieve a true and incontestable beauty in real sonatas. Corelli and M. Michel are the Bossuets, the Fénelons, the Demosthenes, and the Ciceros of music. Their works contest with the *pièces* of Marais and Couperin as the divine prose of these illustrious orators and priests does with the poetry of Homer and Virgil.

The first poetry man wrote was hymns to the Gods. The oracles (which were to render them homage) began by being in verse.

In like manner, man began music with airs and *pièces*. In these, the neatness of *ricochets* and *tours de gozier*,<sup>12</sup> the search in the positions for many difficult fingerings for use in certain connections (as for example when crossing to distant strings without touching those between), the imitation of animals (like the nightingale, locust, cuckoo, etc.), the painting in musical notes of the passions of man in the tempest of Leandre and Hero (as was essayed

<sup>12</sup>*Ricochet* here means off-the-string bowings, which Le Blanc later specifically describes as characterizing Marais's playing. It should be pointed out that Jean Rousseau emphatically disapproved of them. (*Traité de la viole*, 1687, p. 73). The *tour de gozier* is the turn.

by Marais the elder and rendered in *Alcyonne*<sup>13</sup>), the Cyclopes expressed by musical notes played in dactylic rhythm, the imitation of the dance by the disposition of musical sounds (together with many figurations, like the interlacing of steps in figured dances), the regularity of a certain number of measures, a refrain to which one returns in a natural manner from which the *rondeau* is derived (such a trite failure in music, in which the same merchandise is resold several times, and yet the listener wants it to keep passing before him so often)—all that has formed what we call *pièces*, which are true poetry in music.

Since poetry is more striking, it prejudices one in its favor more than prose does, and similarly, *pièces* more than sonatas. That does not mean that one can judge in favor of the first to the disadvantage of the second, and does not deny that poetry would be excluded from the ordinary business of life as an inconvenience, to the point that even the priestess of the oracles (although she had little to say in her answers) rid herself of the troublesome yoke of having to measure her words.

Good God, what would it have been like if rhyme had had to be found at the ends of lines of verse and they had to succeed each other as masculine and feminine [in daily life]. Through a completely parallel situation we can see that it is fortunate that we have the conventional formulas of sonatas, for they connect the conversation of the fingers, which lasts a long time without abating. On the other hand, in *pièces*, one resorts to witticisms which are only good when they are extraordinary. It is thus with sonatas; the business of everyday life succeeds better by speaking than by singing, like all players of *pièces* (who resemble those who seek to be brilliant at a party), who are thought to be more hostile than friendly to a comfortable place in society as soon as they make an effort to be impressive.

*Pièces* descend to appearing occasionally and for a little while to win admiration and a kind of veneration, coming back like holy relics, to be seen only through a peep-hole. With sonatas, it is proved, however, how much more affable is the role which, blending its pleasures with those of an obliging lady, plays what

<sup>13</sup>Marais's most successful opera, produced at the Académie de Musique in 1706. The most famous scene was a musical representation of a tempest, one of the earliest such representational pieces of orchestral music.

gives pleasure to a fatuous and fickle listener, which at once diverts her curiosity about music by ostentation, so that she can win for herself the right to despise that which she pretends to scorn to hear.

Furthermore with regard to *pièces*, too much artifice is a hindrance in a group of beautiful ladies; too much refinement wearies in the ordinary course of life. It is disgusting to act in a comedy all the time, and repugnant never to walk except on the stilts of tragedy. Sonatas have been adopted in place of *pièces* because their style is more humanizing.

One never grows weary of playing over the second and third books<sup>14</sup> of M. Michel—incomparable sonatas—which, compared to *pièces*, are like the warbling of the nightingale, far removed from degenerating to the triteness of airs whistled by the linnet.

Corelli has thrown himself wholly on the side of harmony. There is no affection on his part of embellished song, through which the author searched to recognize the melody.<sup>15</sup> Taking little note of how he was regarded, he hurled forth all the fire of his genius in the music, the better to light up its beauties, a better way to make them perfectly perceived than to keep the reasons to oneself, like Cicero. The less resplendent the music appeared, the more resplendent Corelli would have been as orator and musician, since it is true that music in which one sacrifices harmony to melody is neither sonorous nor satisfies the ear musically.

The French nation, avid for honor, has surrendered utterly to that which is called Melody, that is to say a division in the atmosphere which defines the shape of a piece to play or sing, which can be compared with the division made by lines of box-wood, which make designs in the Garden of the Tuileries. The artist himself has come to be admired, which is what he seeks passionately. Harmony requires inventiveness above all, and to this the author pays no heed nor care. The listener, who eagerly wishes to appear knowledgeable (a fruit of education, which he doesn't really possess), congratulates himself on salvaging some scraps of melody which he picked up by rote and which were retained by memory.

<sup>14</sup>Michel Mascitti, *Sonate da Camera a violino solo col violone o cembalo*, Opera seconda, 1706, and *Sonate da Camera a violino solo col violone o cembalo*, Opera terza, 1707.

<sup>15</sup>It is clear from what follows that Le Blanc either was unfamiliar with or disapproved of such highly embellished performances of the Corelli sonatas as are represented in the Roger edition of 1715(?).

It is not the same with harmony. It must be possessed completely or it would be better to display nothing. "By heart" is not acceptable. The ear of Phylomèle<sup>16</sup> and diligent study are necessary. The young nightingales listen attentively to the old ones, and among them there are no gentlemen or "little masters" who flatter themselves that they know everything without having studied.

One can boldly conclude that preference given to melody is the evasion of a superficial nature, which thinks that masquerading as a scholar and being one are the same thing. On the other hand, the love of harmony has its roots in soft ground—all for effect, nothing for display.

Thus the chords in music and the beauty of the violin excite the admiration of the Italians—like Demosthenes they go right to the heart, while the French seek, in the manner of Cicero, to admire the composer for his method of treating the subject; his approach appeals to the intellect. In Italy, one writes, "Ah! how touching the music is," and in France, "Ah! how witty the musician is."

*Pièces* fill the bill perfectly for deceiving a group in which you find yourself rarely, or for showing important people your true worth under a microscope (where you appear only a few moments). But, for playing often or long with those ladies (of whom there are many) who are really proficient on the harpsichord, the *pièces* leave their cultivator on a sand-bar and the rocks appear soon enough. Beyond the shoals whimsies and caprices appear—the one's playing is not completely in hand, and the evasions by which one escapes the pursuit of the devotees who throng about the man of *pièces*. Alas! They entreat him to his own discredit for they do not know that if he has already been heard, he is being invited to redundancy. The fountain has dried up; the water has been swallowed in great draughts, but it no longer flows from the source.

Forcroi senior, anxious to make the viol its own master again (as it had been up to his time, beyond any comparison with the other instruments confined to *pièces* (made war on playing by heart, as he would on gross ignorance of the most conspicuous sort, when playing by heart had been made the basis of learning. It was such rote-playing which rendered the soul weak, not adventurous, and

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<sup>16</sup>Philomela was a Greek princess who was rescued from death by being transformed by the gods into a nightingale.

kept the hand in torpor. He always considered that the time spent memorizing was lost, just like speeches which are inclined to have either a grand style of delivery or of composition.

The English have wisely decided to preach with text in hand; the Emporor Augustus did this in his own speeches which he read without affectation.

A good way to work is to develop the habit of reading well at sight without previous study and with ease. The hand develops infinitely better by this means and comes to surpass those of the enchanters who play by ear. Usually in sonatas and often enough in *pièces*, they are caught with a chink in their armour, since they are not well convinced that the ornaments they draw out are infinitely less for flattering (as they think from the very beginning of their studies, when they pretend to be agreeable too soon) than for drawing sweetness by strength, as Samson did. The true softening comes as a result of having mongrelized the instruments often, so that the sustained sound is rendered continuous like that of the voice. One finds oneself a master of diminishing the sound imperceptibly, as with something which is pulled which is made to pass on from a large channel to a smaller one and finally to a little one.

Elegance of musical discourse consists of making the weakening of the sound follow an increase properly, like the well-formed leg of a lady, which the Queen of Navarre remarked had such power over the heart of man. The swell is used in each direction in which a phrase of music ends. The conjunctive particles (which would not make sense pronounced alone, and which only serve as connecting links) are weakened. The rest are varied, as M. Matot of the King's household knows so well how to do.<sup>17</sup>

It is very easy to see how the style of playing a sonata (drawing forth a continuous sound, which like the voice, is masterfully shaped in motion, like clay on the potter's wheel) is more suitable for variety and nobility of playing than the style of playing *pièces*—tick-tock. By raised bow-strokes, all in the air,<sup>18</sup> which resemble so much the plucking of the lute or the guitar (on whose model Marais senior composed his *pièces*), with which, when he had varied them by six different kinds of bow strokes, it was possible to reproach the lack of expression of the harpsichord (who suffered from this a total eclipse). They are simple (giving their

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<sup>17</sup>Nothing further is known about M. Matot.

<sup>18</sup>The *ricochet* of which Jean Rousseau so strongly disapproved.



stroke on the viol string just as the harpsichord-jack does on the harpsichord string) and not complex like the Italian style, in which the bow, by down-bows and up-bows, uniform and connected, without their succession being perceptible, produces cascades of notes, multiplied infinitely, which only appear as a continuity, like those formed by the throats of Cossoni and Faustina.

By means of the style described above, the viol does not have that continuity of sound of which one makes what one will, like that achieved on the violin, where the bow pressing on the string produces a column of pliable sound, like the stream of water flowing from a fountain on whose outlet the hand is held, controlling the release of as much or as little water as is wanted or stopping it completely if desired. Violin-playing would be of such beauty that it would have the forceful effect of the fountain of Saint-Cloud at its command. What swell or diminuendo would it be able to make! But how to sustain a whole note or more—that is the failure of the violin and the triumph of the voice and of the flute.

To offset this, a kind of harmonious sound, which comes out of the viola da gamba like the chimes of a clock, results from Marais's composition and style of playing. After hearing it, one would not want to hear the melody performed by the voice any more than after drinking the excellent wine of Beaune<sup>19</sup> one would want to drink just any kind of red wine without grimacing!

Consequently, that initial aversion which caused the substitution of sonatas (which have more faithful companions) for *pièces* was vanquished.

As a result of having heard Marais senior, Forcroy senior created a beautiful style which spoke without the embarrassing preparation of a novice. He then founded another school of playing sonatas in the most correct manner, in which a sparkling sound resulted from a mature taste, reconciling French harmony to the resonance of Italian vocal melody. Since the *andante* was the hallmark of the sonata, those who espoused them read them directly at sight and played with that agreeable ease of which the lawyer Du Mont spoke, saying that it was not necessary to swell up the throat, just as for the dramatic tragedy, in order to pull it off well you have to study your role and thus give it a life-like touch. It is noteworthy that players of *pièces*, with their affected tastes and their unnatural style, do not acquire the natural style at all, either at

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<sup>19</sup>Beaune is a famous red wine from the town of Beaune in the Côte-d'Or.

sight or with study, for they only get the prize when they adopt the tragedian's costume.

Are not those who play what they find in a book with much emotion and who express themselves in beautiful prose on a great variety of subjects presented to them preferable (like the orator Cochin) to those who have just memorized some nice scenes from Racine?

One understands better at court [Versailles] than in the city [Paris] that the natural style has more attraction than constraint and studied effect: two climates, or Ponthieu and Beaubourg,<sup>20</sup> exchanging the reputation of the one for the other—as the military eloquence of Caesar contents for approbation with the studied art of Cicero.

## SECOND PART

### Whether the Preference Should be For the Viola Da Gamba or the Violin. The Strategem of the Latter to Obtain it.

The empire of the viola da gamba was founded and established powerfully by Marais senior, who, like Simon<sup>21</sup> in the realm of Athens, formed his kingdom of beautiful *pièces* in goodly number. Forcroy senior, another Selim I,<sup>22</sup> who came to add to the Empire as much as had been there before him, having given and conquered the sonatas—a prodigious conquest which resulted in the inclusion of the viol in the works of other composers, restoring it as a participant in newly created works being written every day. Finally, the Decaix family<sup>23</sup> had procured a solid support from the side of the accompaniment, through a free way of handling the bow which enabled their students to draw a sound of the most beautiful nature. In this way, a triangular Empire, like Sicily or Africa, was

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<sup>20</sup>Ponthieu is a region in Picardy; Beaubourg, a street in Paris. The contrast is thus between the province and the city.

<sup>21</sup>Here Le Blanc clearly means Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, who was also a lyric poet, a double analogy which would be suitable to describe Marais.

<sup>22</sup>A sixteenth century Turkish Sultan, whose ferocity and military brilliance were both legendary. During his short reign he doubled the size of his Empire.

<sup>23</sup>Louis de Caix d'Hervelois (c. 1670-c. 1760) was an important gambist and composer whose three sisters were also fine performers on the viola da gamba. The *Pardessus de Viole* was cultivated by de Caix d'Hervelois as well as the *Basse de Viole*.



conquered on three sides where it could have been attacked, and it was promised an eternal duration (without deceiving itself too much). But Heaven is pleased to confound the projects here below, seizing precisely the smallest subjects to draw from them the greatest effects.

Sultan Violin, an abortion and a pygmy, had it in his head to have a grudge against the universal monarchy. Not content with his portion, Italy, he proposed to invade the nearby States and do to the viola da gamba in her turn what she had done to the lute, theorbo and guitar (not even making an exception for the harp of King David) who had all been overwhelmed by the charm of Marais' *pièces*. To aspire and to have to carry it out was one and the same thing. Just exactly as in the case of Porto-Carrero, the governor of Dourlans (who according to Father Daniel, had the soul of a giant in the body of a dwarf), the violin was provided with the soul of Enceladus.<sup>24</sup> In his small body resided an extraordinary force, and he spoke only of ruining the other instruments who were his rivals, of interring his adversaries alive, and of burying completely their honeyed compositions under the mountains on which he claimed to plant his own piercing and piquant compositions. It is not sweet persuasion flowing from his lips, like a stream of milk, which he would have; he wants to transport by torrents of voluptuous notes.

The violin, pushed on by the spirit of Belial (as Dante said of Pierre Gradenige when he wanted to change the government of Venice<sup>25</sup>), held council with his adherents at the Tuileries in an enormous hall, which deserved either that sort of people or the beggars of the Netherlands holding their own counsel.<sup>26</sup> Here the Violin is now in command. He then proposed that he would just as soon be destroyed if he were not introduced to the greatest

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<sup>24</sup>In Greek mythology, the giant Enceladus was one of the Titans who fought against Zeus. He was killed by Athena who threw a rock at him which became the island of Sicily.

<sup>25</sup>Pietro Gradenigo (1251-1311) was the Doge of Venice who established the Council of Twelve (later Council of 10). Dante, whose *De Monarchia* states the principle of a single prince, would not have approved, although his comment about Gradenigo has not been preserved.

<sup>26</sup>The Salle des Suisse in the Palace of the Tuileries was the hall in which the *concert spirituel* had been founded by Philidor in 1725.

monarch in Christendom,<sup>27</sup> for Italy with its princes meant nothing to him anymore; he wanted to swim in a great ocean.

The Sultan Violin's two acolytes were called M. Harpsichord and Sir Violoncello. They were joined together to temper his piquancy (since without them the sting would be felt too much), like salt or spice which ought, for seasoning, only be regretted if it is lacking but should never make its presence too perceptible.

The Violin, taking his pulse, realized that his strings were short and thick, that the bow bit into them with difficulty, that it required pressure which was fatiguing to the player, and that the extraordinary tension of the strings (since they were so short) made them shrill. If cadences were made, the string had to be crushed to overcome its resistance; they could never be brilliant and delicate like those of the flute. He felt himself even more inferior to the viol if harmony was discussed in suitable surroundings. He would enter the lists more appropriately with the *trompette marine*, which like the violin is all voice, without resonance. But an equal rival did not suit the violin. He proposed to strike the viola da gamba and the flute from the rolls of musicians and to establish their ruin. This is the route by which he sought to procure it.

To attack the viol, to shout above her, to speak louder than she could at the same time, to jump on her body—Sultan Violin would do it gladly if that had been all that was required to conquer her, but it was essential to put up a good fight, and above all to make assaults at the places where the viol had been established long since in friendly country. It would be hard for a parvenu to penetrate among the great who were her protectors. The preliminaries were so uncouth that he even introduced himself (their relationship in this kingdom is like that of the framework of a building, in that one always remains an outsider if one is not placed on good authority).

The Violin, who was then neither Sultan nor so proud as he is now, approached the Harpsichord and Violoncello humbly and said to them, "Fine Sirs, the first one of you is already established among the ladies who get the *pièces* of Couperin for you; the other is relegated to Thuyles with the children's choir where he has only their delicate touch to flatter everything. It will only depend on you for one to make his fortune and the other to increase his. I

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<sup>27</sup>The King of France.

propose that you join me and that between us, we support the three instruments which alone are necessary in music with which all others can be surpassed and in whose absence no substitute can be found to make up for them."

They thanked him *affettuoso*, making him the compliment that he was the Alexander [the Great] of instruments, with a better title than Rodilard to be king among the cats.<sup>28</sup> They saluted him ahead of time as Attila, the scourge of the viola da gamba and as the exterminator of all the half-breed instruments. Thereupon they discussed the methods he had available for use.

The Violin answered, "They are all prepared; with my concertos we will equal the Opera in large audiences and with sonatas *a due* and trio-sonatas I want to annihilate all the asthmatic concerts, and exhaust once and for all the source of such expressions as 'Ah! I am not in practice,' 'Eh! I have never felt less in the mood for *pièces*, particularly for the viol,' without even counting the protestations about memory slips. I, the Violin, vow that I will never be caught napping or making inappropriate excuses for myself."

The Violoncello, which up to now had been regarded as a miserable dunce, a poor hated devil, who had been dying of hunger, with no hearty free meals, now flattered himself that he would receive many caresses instead of the viol; already he imagined a happiness which made him weep with tenderness.

The Harpsichord rejoiced at becoming a commercial instrument. The ladies who, in the heyday of the *pièces* only amused themselves with the Harpsichord until they got married would not give him his dismissal after the marriage any more when sonatas came to prevail. And, like Heloise and Sappho, they would outdo their master Pindar in material benefits as well as the elegance which they already possessed.

The violin (which had the "ayes") intended to say something to the effect that Themistocles, who could not gain admittance to the drillfields of the Nobles of Athens (that is, those born of Athenian father and mother), found the secret of ennoblement of the drill-field of the *metoikoi* [aliens residing in Athens], from

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<sup>28</sup>Rodilard (Bacon-eater) was a cat in the *Fables* of La Fontaine.

whose number came those who led the principal citizens and who were trained with them.<sup>29</sup>

The Violin, to be sure, could not contest with the Viol in the delicacy of its moving sound or its harmony, so refined in its resonance when it was heard in the proper place for examining its attributes at close range. So to allow them to make an impression, he advised moving the setting to an immense hall, where there would be many effects which were as prejudicial to the Viol as they would be favorable to the Violin.

It was already true that nothing from the time of Marais senior (that great athlete against the music from across the Alps) appeared any more in the musical world. No more discussion is heard of any of his achievements. *L'Arabesque*, his last work, showed the magnitude of the loss (for the sort of person who judged by experience), for it had compositions which were so correct, with the liveliest fire of a young man full of activity and charm!<sup>30</sup>

The hero left. The monsters began to reappear, to learn about meowings in the performance, finicky trimmings, and ornaments set right and wrong. With the irregularity in the compositions, in which one idea contradicted another, taste became fickle. One year expressions were in vogue which were contrary to those used the preceding year. The scoundrels who suppressed most of the little science they had revealed only an arm or leg of their knowledge—and that only in proportion to a vile special interest, not in the interest of music—as if it were an art possessed only in order to deceive. They completely applied themselves afresh to the task of selling anew their Mithradates.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Themistocles (c. 515-499 B. C.) was the Athenian soldier and statesman who led the Greek victory against Xerxes at the battle of Salamis in 480 B. C. Although he was a native-born resident of Athens, he had a Carian or Thracian mother so the Violin here assumes that he made an alliance with the aliens who lived in Athens but were not eligible for citizenship. In fact, the Periclean test of citizenship (native-born on both sides) was not established until after Themistocles's time, but Le Blanc stretches the analogy to make the violin appear as a foreigner in league with other aliens to achieve supreme power in their adopted land.

<sup>30</sup>See Marin Marais, *5me livre de pièces de viole* (1725).

<sup>31</sup>Mithradates VI, King of Pontus, fought against the Romans in several campaigns in the first century B. C. According to legend he had incredible strength, skill and intellect but was a barbarian with only a veneer of Greek education. He trusted no one, murdered his friends, and, according to rumour, so saturated himself with poison that he was immune to it.

Forcrois senior sometimes pushed himself forward too much, when he affected a whimsical, fantastic, bizarre manner, through the desire to rise too high, which he did not reconcile sufficiently with the interests of the viol. He had no students and the time came when he lacked a sufficient number to push back the embankments, maintain the dikes, and raise the piers which could shelter the viol in the harbor during the frightful floods the violin was preparing with the united forces, both from here and beyond the mountains.<sup>32</sup> And since the ocean formed neither generals nor captains, he sought to end the inequality by a total eclipse,<sup>33</sup> as an aid in time of need, recognizing too late when there was no more time that perhaps he sought to supply a remedy to no avail. What resistance could he make that would be great enough against such assaults from all sides, since he was only a generalissimo without troops?

The Violin (full of evil intentions against the Viol) seized precisely the time which was most unfavorable to a good defense to put his plan into execution, attacking with all the machines of war and the engines of Archimedes.

At the point of beginning the enterprise, he made his prayer (as Sylla prayed about vanquishing Telesinus)<sup>34</sup> addressing his prayers to Novelty, in this manner: "Goddess all powerful in this land, you who are in continual motion, like the Wheel of Fortune on earth and the Minerals within its bowels, so that with you one goes naturally from bad to mediocre and from commonplace to good (for as it forms taste, the nation always moves along a path of change which is a globe), you have, of necessity, also the other quality of promising to go from the excellent to the detestable. It is this second quality which I invoke (for it serves no purpose for the French to be well if they do not perceive it, or to be in the right about the commodity of music). If with restlessness inciting them to turn in the other direction they yield to the desire for change, make it seize them immediately and let it be in my favor, letting even drums and trumpets benefit from it, and dress the French

(Continued on Page 69)

<sup>32</sup>By *les forces réunies*, Le Blanc also refers to the concept of *Les goûts-réunis* (*The Reunited Tastes*), which found its most celebrated expression in Couperin's work by that title.

<sup>33</sup>Forqueray's retirement to Nantes in 1736.

<sup>34</sup>Sulla, a Roman general, defeated and beheaded the Samnite commander Pontius Telesinus in 82 B. C.

## Henry Blakiston who? or Some Early Instruments at the Library of Congress

FRANK TRAFICANTE

LIBRARY . . . a room, a section or series of sections of a building, or a building itself given over to books, manuscripts, musical scores, or other literary and sometimes artistic materials (as paintings or musical recordings) . . . an institution for the custody or administration of such a collection [as] the *Library* of Congress . . .<sup>1</sup>

This definition is particularly apt, since it cites the Library of Congress as an example of what a library is. In its fairly specific itemization of the kinds of things which one might expect to find in a library no mention is made of musical instruments. Yet, this very Library of Congress has in its possession a number of quite remarkable instruments.

A need to preserve equilibrium of the mind amidst an increasing proliferation of data causes human beings to arrange categories into which artificially sorted items of information may be placed, the better to remember and understand the everyday bombardment of the senses. It is a kind of mental self-preservation instinct. Often, however, the recalcitrance of facts and other properties of awareness forces us to make generalizations that are too broad and to organize categories which are too tenuous. Even these have a certain usefulness in dealing with reality, but the cautious person will keep in mind the realization that exceptions may sometimes overpower the value of the assumption. An example of such an exception-laden but all too prevalent assumption is expressed in the following fictitious quotation, "In Washington D. C. the Music Division of the Library of Congress is where books and manuscripts are to be found, while musical instruments are in the Music Division of the Smithsonian Institution." This doctrine is neither false nor useless. Yet, the unquestioning believer lives in ignorance of some most significant collections of instruments which reside in the place where books are supposed to be.

The names of at least three donors of instruments to the Library of Congress stand out for the generosity of their gifts—

<sup>1</sup>Webster's *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1966, p. 1304.

Gertrude Clarke Whittall, Dayton C. Miller, and Henry Blakiston Wilkins. To certain groups among the musically knowledgeable two of these persons hardly require introduction. Gertrude Clarke Whittall is known to lovers of chamber music as the donor of a magnificent quintet of three violins, a viola, and a cello by Antonio Stradivari together with a set of Tourte bows.<sup>2</sup> Devotees of the flute know Dayton C. Miller as the donor of a priceless collection of instruments encompassing a wide spectrum with flutes of silver, gold, ivory, and jade at one end to tribal whistles of bone or wood at the other, including one with a piece of human scalp attached.<sup>3</sup> But who ever heard of Henry Blakiston Wilkins?

By way of introducing the third donor to the readers of these pages it may be useful to point out the somewhat curious and telling comparisons which can be drawn between his gift and that of Gertrude Whittall's. The latter is remembered as the generous lady who, in 1936, gave to the Library of Congress and by extension to the people of the United States five fine string instruments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The former deserves to be remembered as the generous gentleman who, in the following year, gave to the same institution for the benefit of the same people five fine string instruments also from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1938 a slim though sumptuous and richly illustrated volume (cited in note 2 above) describing the Whittall instruments was published. No volume devoted to the Wilkins instruments has ever appeared. The Whittall instruments were recognized at the time of their bequest no less than they are at the present as a collection of clear and undisputed significance. Imagine, on the other hand, the reaction of the typical chamber music enthusiast of the 1930s on learning that Henry Wilkins had given to the Library of Congress:

1. A [quinton] made by François le Jeune, Paris, 1760.
2. A [par-dessus de viole] made by Gersan, Paris, 1749.
3. A viola da gamba made by Pieter Rombouts, Amsterdam, ca. 1700.
4. A viola d'amore made by Ferdinando Gagliano, 1763.

<sup>2</sup>See: William Dana Orcutt, *The Stradivari Memorial at Washington, the National Capital*, Washington: Library of Congress, 1938.

<sup>3</sup>See: Laura E. Gilliam and William Lichtenwanger (eds.), *The Dayton C. Miller Flute Collection: A Checklist of the Instruments*, Washington: Library of Congress, 1961.

5. A viola d'amore made by an unknown maker in the second half of the 17th century.<sup>4</sup>

A final point of comparison remains. The Whittall bequest included the provision of funds for maintenance and, most importantly, for the support of a continuing series of concerts in which the instruments would be played by some of the most notable artists in the field of chamber music.<sup>5</sup> Henry Wilkins was a close friend of Gertrude Whittall's and for a time served as honorary

<sup>4</sup>*Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1937*, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937, p. 140 (hereafter referred to as *Annual Report*). The two instrument names which are bracketed in our list—[quinton] and [par-dessus de viole]—are erroneously reversed in the list as it appears in the *Annual Report*. I have adopted the position of Curt Sachs (*The History of Musical Instruments*, New York: Norton, 1940, p. 361) that the term quinton should be reserved for reference to the five-string violin. Par-dessus de viole is here understood as a term of reference to the five-string treble viol. The assumption of error in the list as found in the *Annual Report*, however, does not depend on the limitation which I place on the term quinton. It is true that the original citation for the Gersan five-string treble viol could remain as is with the name quinton were the broader usage adopted for that term. Yet, reference to the le Jeune five-string violin as a par-dessus de viole would continue to be incorrect. It would have to be identified, also, as quinton. Thus, both instruments 1. and 2. in our list would have the same name. I believe, therefore, that it is preferable to restrict the term quinton to the type of instrument represented by the le Jeune example and to use the contrasting term, par-dessus de viole, for the distinctly different Gersan instrument.

Neither the bass viola da gamba cited as number 3. nor the viola d'amore cited as number 5. has a label. The basis for establishing maker and date for these two instruments is unknown to me.

<sup>5</sup>During the first two years after donating the instruments Whittall gave more than \$150,000 to put the concerts on a firm financial footing. The first series of performances took place in December of 1936 and January of 1937. Engaged to play on the Stradivari instruments during this inaugural season were the: Gordon, Musical Art, Roth, and appropriately enough, Stradivarius Quartets. It was soon realized, however, that even fine Stradivari instruments require long familiarity for satisfactory artistic results to ensue. In 1940, accordingly, a new policy, made possible by substantial increases to the Whittall endowment, was begun. It was announced (*Annual Report* for 1940, p. 136) that the Budapest Quartet had been engaged as quartet in residence. They were to live in Washington and, "by daily practice and frequent public performance, become thoroughly proficient in playing the Stradivari instruments . . ." as a result of which both the instruments and the performers were expected to be "heard to better advantage than was formerly possible." The new arrangement proved so satisfactory that it was continued for more than two decades until 1962 when the Budapest Quartet left the Library. The position was filled in the same year by the appointment of the Juilliard Quartet which continues the tradition of Whittall concerts at the Library of Congress to the present day.



curator of her collection, but he and she were not in the same league. His gift was of necessity more modest. The instruments were given without bows and with provision neither for the replacement of short-lived gut strings nor for the maintenance which string instruments inevitably require from time to time especially when they are not often played.

Much has changed since 1937 in the United States as elsewhere. Societies dedicated to the revival of early music and instruments have sprung up. Professional makers of renaissance and baroque instruments are active in many parts of the country. Judging from both their waiting lists and their price lists they seem to be enjoying a modest prosperity enhanced, no doubt, by orders from increasing numbers of college and university music departments. Lack of interest can no longer serve as justification for the general unawareness which still exists with regard to the Wilkins collection at the Library of Congress. Photographs of these instruments and a chart showing their measurements appear at the end of this article.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the Whittall, Miller, and Wilkins instruments a number of others are included among the collections of the Music Division. These can be given only passing mention here. In 1937, the year in which the Wilkins instruments went to the Library, Rudolf H. Wurlitzer of Cincinnati donated a pochette and bow with a hand-tooled leather case. During the following year three instruments were received. A violin by Niccolò Amati and two bows were presented by Mrs. Robert Somers Brookings; Mr. Joseph Millet gave a guitar by George Washburn which once belonged to his former teacher, the eminent guitarist Luis T. Romero; and the New York firm of Steinway and Sons substituted a new grand piano (style S) for the upright which had been on loan to the Library during the previous fifteen years. A Steinway Duo-Art player-piano has been in the Library since 1928, when it was given by H. B. Tremain, then president of the Aeolian Company. Completing the list of European instruments are two violins and two bows once owned and played by the great Fritz Kreisler. One of the violins, a Guarneri made in 1733, is thought to be at least the

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<sup>6</sup>For assistance in my efforts to gather information on instruments at the Library of Congress I express my appreciation to many friends and former colleagues in the Music Division. Special gratitude goes to Mr. Jon Newsom for his expertise in making the photographs and to Mr. William Lichtenwanger whose memory of past events includes a specificity that is truly remarkable.

equal of those in the Whittall collection. The other is of special interest as it was Kreisler's small boyhood violin. Of non-European instruments, apart from those in the Miller collection, the Library has two Laotian khens which were given in 1954 by Senator Michael J. Mansfield, who had just returned from a visit to Laos, and a collection of instruments presented by the King of Thailand in 1960. The Thai collection is comprised of nine instruments from the string, percussion, and wind categories.<sup>7</sup>

The Library's instruments can be made available to readers for viewing. Certain ones—the piano, the guitar, the Amati violin, and those in the Wilkins collection—may be used by qualified persons who wish to play over music in the collections of the Music Division. A sound proof room was constructed in 1927 especially for this purpose as the gift of H. B. Tremain.<sup>8</sup> With regard to the Wilkins collection, however, the performing privilege is largely illusory for reasons already indicated. Surely, interest in early music and instruments has now grown to the degree that somewhere in this grand country there is a bow maker willing to donate five examples of his craft so that the strings may be made to vibrate once again. And surely, the members of societies such as the Viola da Gamba Society of America, the newly formed American Musical Instrument Society, and even the venerable American Musicological Society with its new standing committee on the

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<sup>7</sup>The various collections of instruments at the Library of Congress are described in a directory of musical instrument collections in the United States and Canada, compiled under the general editorship of William Lichtenwanger and scheduled for publication in 1974 by the Music Library Association. This work will help to draw from undeserved obscurity numerous collections such as the one here under consideration. Other published references to instruments at the Library are found in the *Annual Report* for 1928, p. 119 (player piano); for 1937, p. 140 (pochette); for 1938, p. 158 (Amati violin, Washburn guitar, Steinway piano); and for 1952, p. 59 (Guarneri violin). I have been unable to find a reference to Kreisler's boyhood violin in the *Annual Report*. A letter in the Music Division from the Charles Foley music publishing house, dated January 19, 1955, apparently refers to this instrument, however. The khens are mentioned in a November 23, 1954 Library of Congress press release numbered 55-29. For a discussion of the Thai instruments see: Cecil Hobbs, "Thailand's Gift of Musical Instruments," *The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, Volume 18, Number 3 (May 1961), pp. 117-120.

<sup>8</sup>Persons wishing to see or use instruments, however, should make a request either in writing or by telephone well in advance of their arrival at the Library. The handling of instruments requires arrangements somewhat out of the normal operations of a library. For this reason it cannot be assumed that personnel charged with the necessary responsibilities will always be available.



Collegium Musicum would be willing to provide the small endowment necessary to maintain these valuable instruments and to provide them with their sounding strings. Thomas Mace, that delightfully quotable musical partisan from the 17th century, knew well that an instrument "for want of *Timely Assistance*" will grow "*Worse and Worse* (sometimes) to *Its Utter Ruine*." Considering the inactivity to which they have been subject the Wilkins instruments are in rather good condition. Yet, each is more or less in need of timely assistance for a crack, an open seam, a detached fingerboard or some other such infirmity. For the aid which is required appeal must be made to the same sort of person to whom Mace dedicated his book. It would be hard to duplicate the charm of his own words in which he tells both for whom the book was written and why.

I Write It Only for the Sober Sort,  
 Who love Right Musick, and will Labour for't:  
 And who will Value Worth in Art, though Old,  
 And not Affrighted with the Good, though told  
   'Tis out of Fashion,  
   By \*\_\_\_\_\_ of the Nation:  
 I Write It also, for to Vindicate  
 The Glory'f Instruments, now out of Date,  
 And out of Fashion Grown, (as Many Tell)  
 'Tis doubtful (sure) that All Things are not Well,  
   When Best Things are  
   Most Sleighted, though most Rare.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument*, London, 1676. See the Preface and the Epistle to the Reader. Mace's italics have not been observed in the quotation from the Epistle. To explain his omission from the sixth line of our quotation Mace wrote, "The Reader has Liberty to put in what Word he thinks most Proper."

## A Note on the Measurements

The measurements were made with a pliable metric tape. Some differences between equivalent front and back measurements resulted from the conformability of the tape to the curvature of the belly. These differences may serve to give some idea of the amount of curvature present. The measurements were taken as follows:

1. *Length*. The front length is from a point touching the neck-bracket under the fingerboard to the midpoint of the belly's bottom edge. When the presence of a hook-bar obstructed the midpoint the tape was placed along one side of the hook-bar to obtain a reading which reached the edge of the belly. The back length is from an imagined line which would connect the upper edges of the two side panels where they meet the neck-bracket to the midpoint of the back's bottom edge.

2. *Breadth*. The breadth was measured across the front and back at three places—the widest point at the upper and lower bouts and the narrowest point at the middle bouts.

3. *Depth*. The top depth was measured across the top of one of the side panels where it meets the neck-bracket. The bend depth was measured at the point where the angle occurs on the backs of flat-backed instruments just above the middle bouts. This measurement was not applicable to the quinton nor to the Gagliano viola d'amore since they both have curved backs. The bottom depth was measured at the midpoint of the bottom or to one side of the hook-bar when one was present.

4. *Sound Hole*. This is the longest straight-line measurement from end to end.

5. *Peg Box and Scroll or Head*. This is the straight-line distance from the upper edge of the nut to the farthest point reached by the scroll or head.

6. *Fingerboard*. For four of the five instruments this is the obvious measurement from the end which meets the lower edge of the nut to the bottom end. The fingerboard of the Gagliano viola d'amore was measured along each of the two sides giving two different lengths due to the fact that this fingerboard is fashioned on a diagonal at the lower end.

7. *Stop*. This represents the vibrating length of the open string from the lower edge of the nut to the upper edge of the bridge.

It seems likely that some of the fittings are not original. The tail

piece on the bass viol was once drilled for six strings. The original holes have been plugged and seven new ones drilled. The peg box, however, shows no signs of having had to undergo alteration in order to accomodate seven strings. The peg boxes of both the quinton and the par-dessus de viole have similar, somewhat crude, ornamental markings.

The older viola d'amore has seven stopped and seven sympathetic strings. The Gagliano instrument has seven stopped but only five sympathetic strings.

### Measurements of the Wilkins Instruments at the Library of Congress Expressed in Centimeters

	Quinton (1760)	Par-dessus (1749)	Bass Viol [c. 1700]	Viola d'Amore (1763) [17th Cent.]	
1. Length					
Front	35	32.7	64.7	36.5	38.5
Back	34.9	32.6	65	36.5	38.3
2. Breadth					
Front-Upper	16.4	15.9	30.4	17.6	17.5
Back-Upper	16.4	15.7	29.6	17.4	17.9
Front-Middle	11.2	11.2	22.5	12	12.5
Back-Middle	11.2	10.8	21.2	12	12.3
Front-Lower	21	19.3	37.3	21.6	22.9
Back-Lower	21.1	19	36.2	21.6	23.3
3. Depth					
Top	3.7	4.8	8.6	4.8	5.5
Bend	—	6	13	—	6.5
Bottom	3.7	6	13.2	5	6.5
4. Sound Hole	7.5	6.4	12	8	8.1
5. Peg Box and Scroll or Head	14.2	13	23	22	23.6
6. Fingerboard	27.3	23	47.1	( 20.7 23.5	28.7
7. Stop	33.2	31.6	64.4	32.8	34.5



Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760



Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760



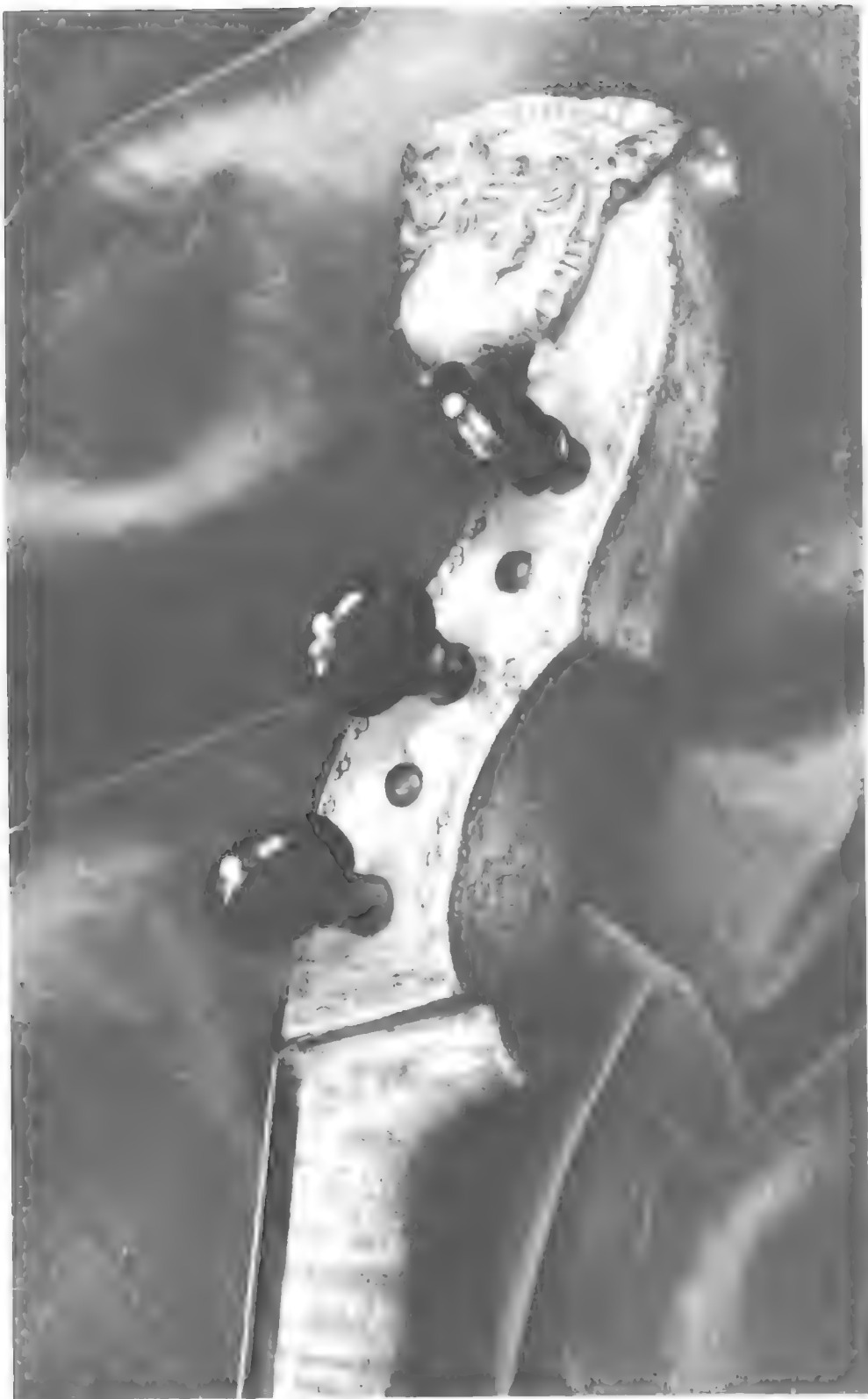
Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760



Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760



Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760



Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760

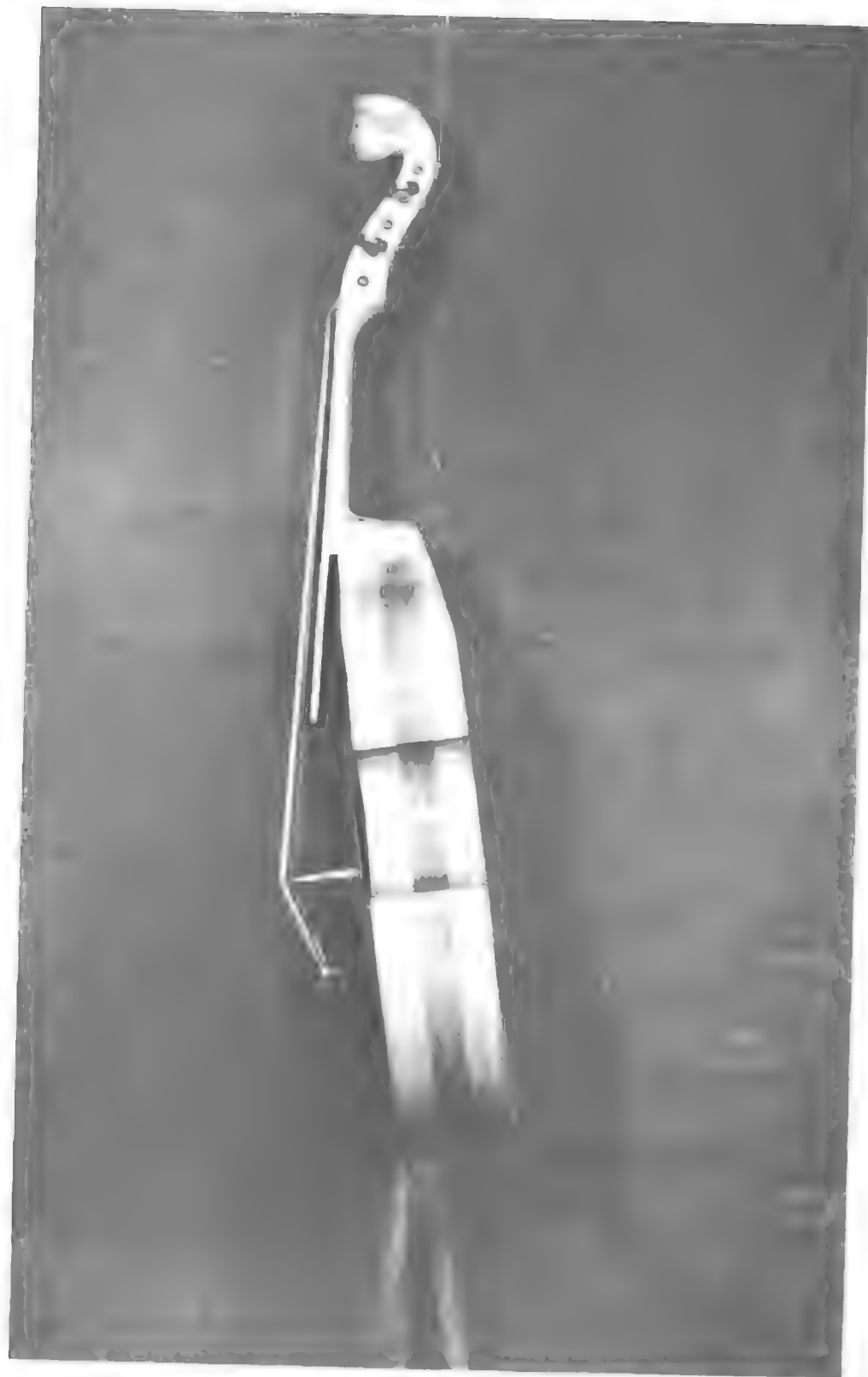


Quinton, François le Jeune, 1760





Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Par-dessus, Gersan, 1749



Bass Viol, (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



Bass Viol, (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)





Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



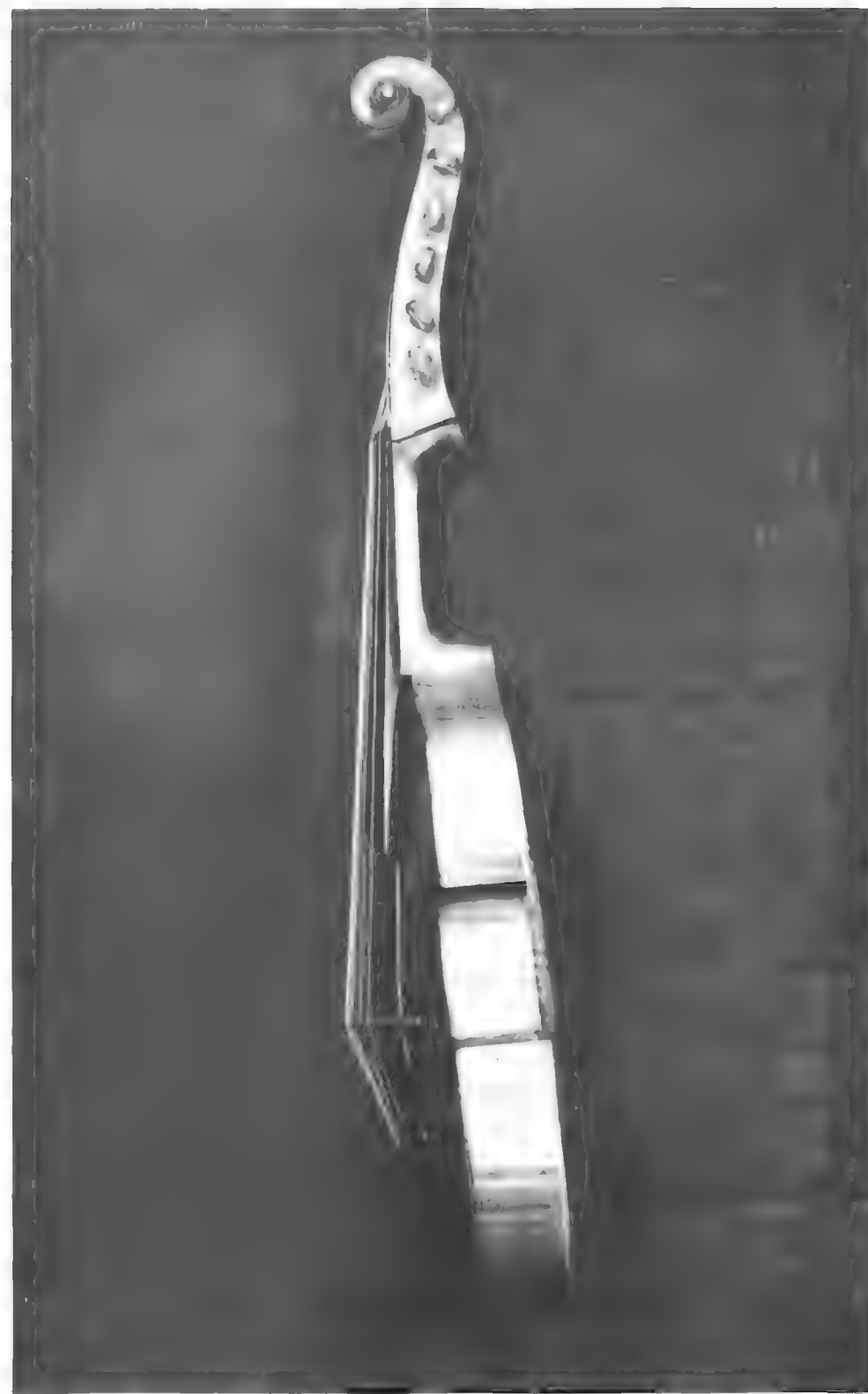
Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



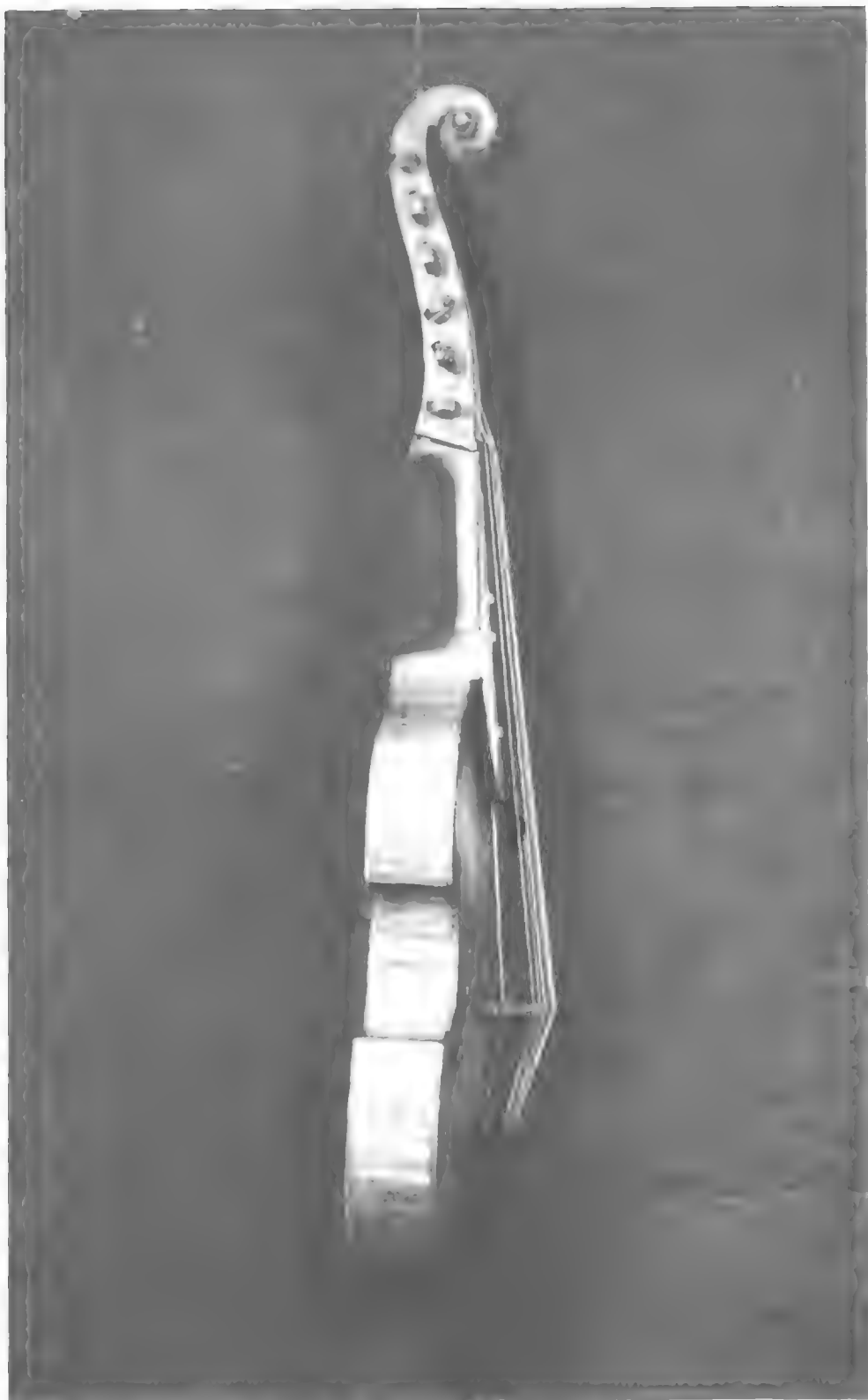
Bass Viol (Rombouts? c. 1700?)



Viola d'Amore, Gagliano, 1763



Viola d'Amore, Gagliano, 1763



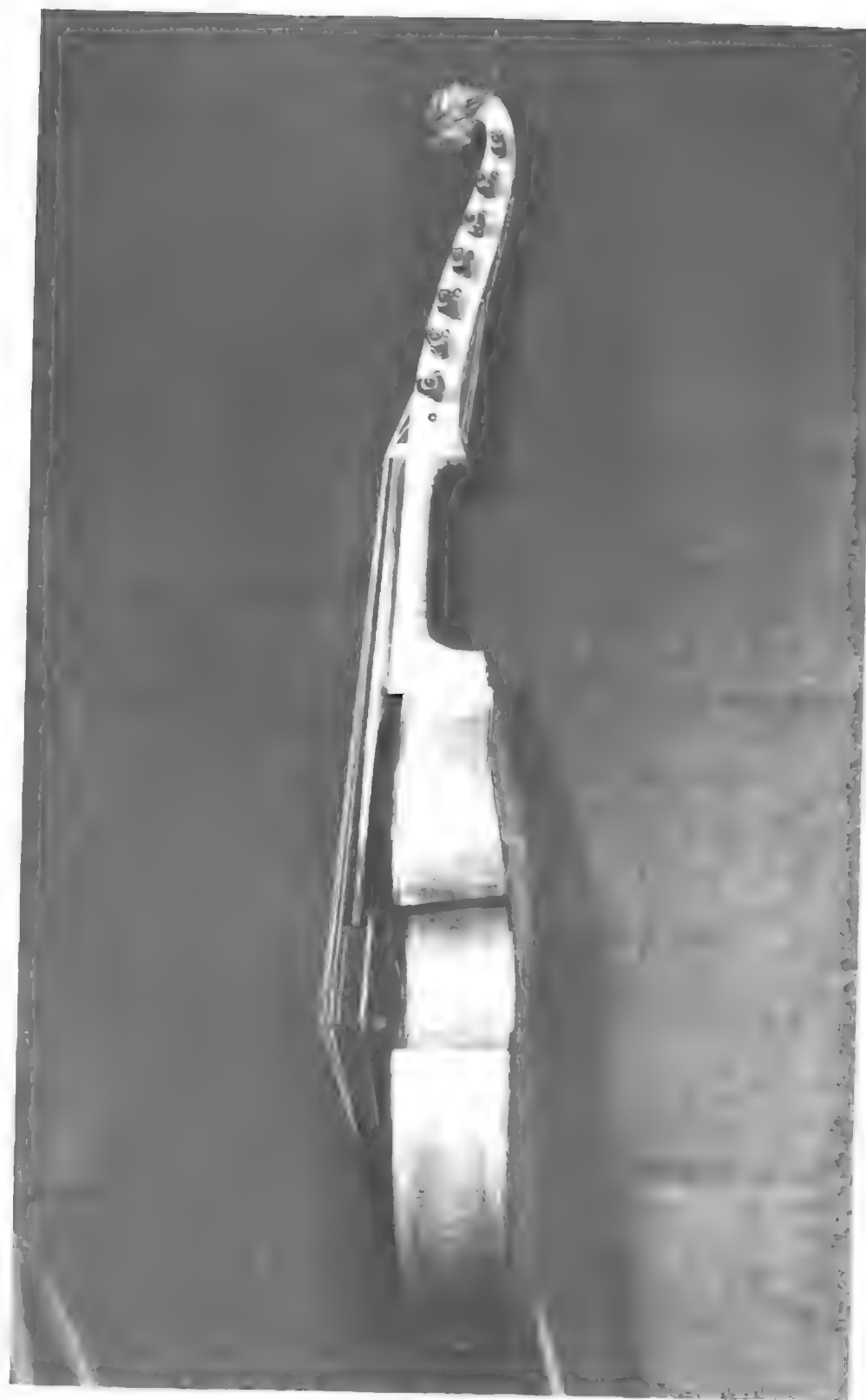
Viola d'Amore, Gagliano, 1763



Viola d'Amore, Gagliano, 1763



Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)



Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)





Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)



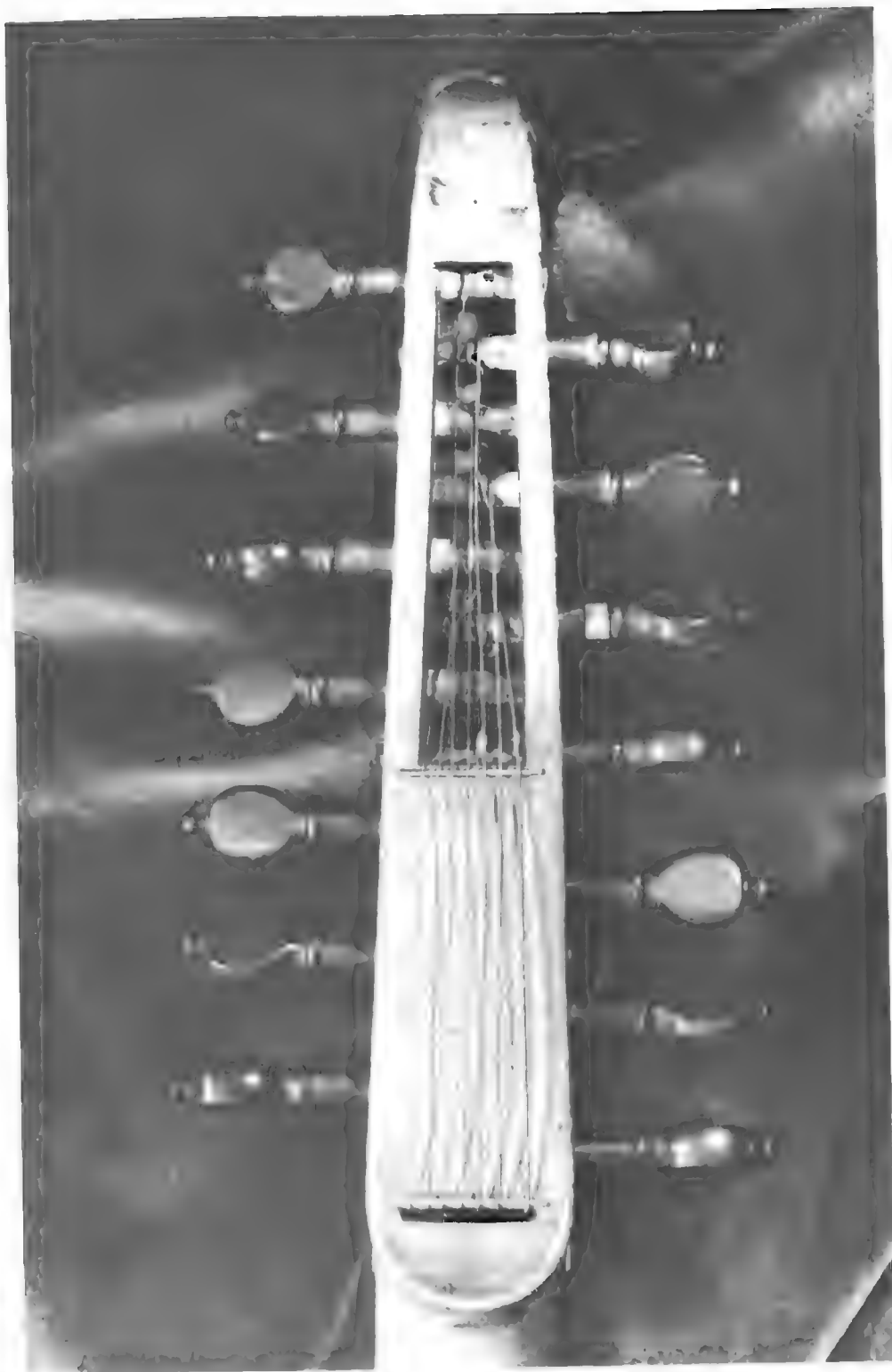
Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)



Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)



Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)



Viola d'Amore, Anonymous (17th Century?)

(Continued from Page 28)

music in the German fashion. Begin by bringing it about that music be in the Italian style."

Filled with these thoughts, he ordered a poster to be put up in Paris and it was granted only too soon.

The posters advertised an entertainment made possible by the bringing together of the very best musicians,—flute, violin and cello—not just from Paris, but from beyond the mountains and beyond the sea, from whence would come the famous musical Athletes of the Nations, like a new Olympic Games.

Lady Renown, just as she was described by Virgil, marched before Somis, Geminiani, and Lancetti.<sup>35</sup> She reported the false as well as the true about the miracles of Art which she reported of them (*Pariter facta atque infecta canebat*).<sup>36</sup>

To this battery from the outside was joined the attack from within, through the desire which Novelty inspired to make music compete in the lordly tournaments. Since Alexander [the Great] refused to wrestle with anyone but kings, the nobles, in imitation of him, did not want to enter the lists themselves any more. They honored them in olden days as crowned actors themselves; henceforth they delighted in them as judges who listened to an entertainment for which the public provided the upkeep and ostentation conceived the diversions.

Music saw her condition as a liberal art worsen, above all in the capitals of the country, where some paid and others danced. The expense of paying a capable person which everyone feared bearing privately all were delighted to see charged to the public.

<sup>35</sup>This is the first time Le Blanc has referred to a cellist of any distinction, as for the most part the cello is cast in a very subsidiary role in the violin's campaign against the viol. Somis, the great Turinese teacher of Leclair, appeared in 1733 in the *concert spirituel*, and his sonatas op. 4 and op. 6 were published in Paris in 1726 and 1734. Le Blanc's view of Somis is actually not negative, and praise for him found later in this pamphlet was still being quoted by Baillot in his violin method (1834). Geminiani, another student of Corelli, was well known in France but spent the years from 1714 to 1749 in the British Isles and probably did not appear at the *concert spirituel* until a later date. Salvatore Lanzetti (c. 1710-1780) was one of the earliest cello virtuosi and played at Paris in 1736. Two volumes of his cello sonatas were published in France the same year. Le Blanc is not referring to an actual concert here in which all three of these musicians appeared together, but instead refers to them as representatives of Italian violin and cello playing who did make a great impression in Paris, particularly during the decade before Le Blanc's pamphlet appeared.

<sup>36</sup>She prophesied equally what was done and what was not done.

Music did not know how to provide her devotees with a counterbalance sufficient to keep from being carried away by financial interest and able to make amends for the ostentation of commanding an art rather than deferring to it. These are the two weaknesses by which Novelty seduces men, as in the case of the Elector of Saxony who covered up the aspect of temporal benefits in the conversion to which he gave ear.<sup>37</sup>

The worldly spirit (that is to say, that art—emerged from the nether regions—of arrogating to oneself the work of others, reusing them as fragments for those artisans who were born to be servants and who are only too happy when their work is ordered) that spirit created the plague for Music in which the Sophocles, the Platos, and the Epaminondasis would find no further successors among people of quality who were not ashamed to wear the actor's buskin. Music, as can be seen only too well, went from the Royal cabinet to the vestibule.<sup>38</sup>

In this way the Violin gained the very important point of displaying its voice in a large place. It had made up for its inferiority of true merit, as when the deficiencies of poor troupes (when they are not trusted) are remedied by the advantage of position in the battle. Much worse, a battlefield was chosen on which his amiable rival would be out of earshot of the audience to make her charms perceptible. (When Ternus's sword had shattered into a thousand pieces, whoever surrendered his own sword to him was threatened.) The Violin converted his own faults (those of being piercing and harsh) into good qualities in the vast place, where his harshness was drowned by that of the Violoncello, who bore all the guilt, and his lack of resonance was supplemented by the open strings of the Harpsichord. Finally, the nature of his sharp, shrill sound won compassion in the scrap-iron setting of the Harpsichord. Thus with the scapegoat of ancient law burdened with the sins of others and with his own, the Violin left them with all the bad appearances. He was not without some delicacy, although it was only harshness disguised, as piling all the blame on them, he only let a diminution of rudeness transpire.

<sup>37</sup>This refers to Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony from 1694-1733, who in 1697 was converted to Roman Catholicism in order to qualify to be elected King of Poland.

<sup>38</sup>Chamber music in which aristocratic amateurs performed were replaced by professional concerts.

The great hall was filled; one was accosted on all sides by the Concert which was named *spirituel*, although despite its name, delicate Harmony was banished from it and it was more sensual than otherwise.

While the Violin played, people were not patient until he finished, but cried out "Miracle!", "The beautiful sound!", "How rich it is!", "What beauty in this clear voice of the Violin, whose sound is between silver and gold, for it has no sourness in its strength nor in the high pitch of such a sound!"

Playing in a new manner, the Violin was admired as it had not been since the time of Lully (when the bow-strokes were chopped up and the hatchet-stroke<sup>39</sup> marked each bar or at least every phrase).

In this playing one could not distinguish downbow or upbow; instead there was heard a continuous sound which was masterfully swelled or diminished, as if it were a voice. The Violin was found suitable for exciting great passions, like LeCouvreur<sup>40</sup> declaiming all of Racine and part of the great Corneille; and the Viol, with its tenderness, was considered to express the *Bergeries* of Racan or the *Elegies*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup>The reference is to the French practice of conducting by tapping audibly with a stick of wood (which had indeed caused Lully's death when he contracted blood-poisoning from the wound received when he hit his foot instead of the floor with the conducting stick). The practice was still in use in Le Blanc's day at the Opéra and is described by J. J. Rousseau in his *Dictionnaire de la Musique*, but of course would not be part of any chamber music or sonata performance. In Lully's day, the violin was an orchestral rather than a solo instrument and this is part of that difference in style between French playing in the Lully manner and Italian playing in the Corelli manner which so preoccupied the early eighteenth century. When Mozart visited Paris in 1778, he could still refer to "the miserable wood-chopper" at the Paris Opera in a letter to his father.

<sup>40</sup>Adrienne Le Couvreur (1690-1730) was one of the greatest French actresses of the eighteenth century. She revolutionized French acting by "introducing noble, natural declamation to the stage and discarding sing-song." (*Le Mercure*, March, 1730). Her performances made a profound emotional effect on all who heard them, and her emphasis on a natural style was in harmony with Rousseau's views and had its counterpart in dance in the reforms of Noverre. This emphasis even led her to play some scenes of Racine barefoot, two centuries before the revolutionary natural style of Isadora Duncan. Her tragic life was the basis of an opera libretto by Scribe.

<sup>41</sup>Honorat de Bueil, Seigneur de Racan (1589-1670) was a lyric pastoral poet. *Bergeries* (1625) was a graceful pastoral comedy, considered somewhat out-of-date by the time Le Blanc wrote.

Nevertheless, despite all its advantages, the Violin encountered a rival where it least expected it in the transverse Flute—a rival which cut severely into the good opinion which he had formed of his proper merit and which he gave out to others about the nature of the sound he produced. The Flute was found to have a better declamation than the Violin and to be the mistress of swelling the sound or making a diminuendo. After the concert was over, the opinion was reported that the flute, played by one Blavet,<sup>42</sup> to be sure, was preferable to the first violin when it imitated the voice (which does not know, as everyone realized, how to make several tones at the same time).

The Violin wanted to rule, whatever the price; and to annihilate the Flute, as well as the Viol, if it could, it made extraordinary efforts. They would make their compositions have chords which would be unplayable on the Flute and fatiguing beyond imagining for the Viol, since the chords are laid out in relation to the open D and G strings of the Violin. There would have to be a filling in of the additional strings in the Viol's intervals (tuned in fourths and a third) for compositions written for an instrument tuned in fifths.

The three books of *XII Sonatas* by M. LeCler would display the majesty of violin-playing in splendor, as well as the correct tuning of chords of which it is capable (to the exclusion of the Organ and the Harpsichord, on which such execrable oaths are made when going from a minor tone to a large major tone).<sup>43</sup>

It was at first thought that this proceeding of the violin against the flute looked as if he had abandoned the great path of fair play to fling himself into the paths of the lost and that the playing of M. Blavet was at the bottom of the attacks which he

<sup>42</sup>Michel Blavet (1700-1768) performed in the *concert spirituel* from the time of its inception. He later spent some time at the court of the flute-loving Prince of Prussia (later Frederick the Great), returning to France to be superintendent of music at the court of the Count of Clermont at Berny. He published three books of flute sonatas (1728, 1731, and 1740) and edited two collections of miscellaneous pieces.

<sup>43</sup>Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764) played at the *concert spirituel* from 1728-1736. The three books of solo sonatas Le Blanc knew would have been op. 1 (1723), op. 2 (1728), and op. 5 (1734), although a fourth book, op. 9, was published in 1738. Despite the context in which Le Blanc refers to them, several of them were written to be played by either flute or violin, those for flute being characterized by a lack of double-stops and a low range restricted to that playable by a flute.

alleged had given him the method for introducing chords. The voices of Faustina and Cossoni<sup>44</sup> were in precisely the same situation in that they could make only a succession of sounds without combining them, like a line which is a continuation of points.<sup>45</sup>

The Harpsichord openly revolted against the Violin, complaining of seeing it poach on its preserves, all sown with chords, and what is more, affecting to triumph in that *genre* for which the small number of its strings made it so unsuitable. Its chords could only be starved, reduced to the space of so small an arena. It also complained that the false fifth—and above all the third—which it produced was the best part of its artillery, with arpeggios where some chords, reinforced by open strings, made an impressive racket by the force of sound of violently compressed strings. But their effect was destitute of the richness of the chords of which the Harpsichord was the immense sea and the vast ocean.

The challenge of the Harpsichord was taken up in good kind. The Violin fell upon him through the agency of M. Le Cler, who is unequalled in performance of chords with the utmost accuracy of pitch. The wise precaution of putting down the fingers with that kind of caution Cicero required of the orator beginning a discourse—that precaution made his playing appear a little nonchalant; but how much better is that control of perfect intonation—so susceptible to the least injury—than that playing which I call shameless (and not bold). That kind of playing never takes care and never fails to make a crunching sound, that is to say, to falsify the intonation with assurance. It only takes the People for dupes, since for them the audacity of the performance has always been as stunning in Music as in Eloquence.

<sup>44</sup>Faustina Bordoni (later Hasse) and Francesca Cuzzoni, the greatest female singers of their day, were rival stars in Handel's opera in London. In 1724, Cuzzoni sang in the *concert italien* in Paris with great success during the summer recess of the London opera; and Faustina may well have sung in Paris for a similar occasion. By 1740, both ladies had returned to the Continent.

<sup>45</sup>There was a strange story current during this period which Corrette mentions about a performance of the Corelli sonatas at the court of the Duke of Orleans. It seems that the French violinists could not play the chords in the Corelli sonatas, and as the Duke was very anxious to hear them, a *group of singers* was assembled to perform them. Clearly Le Blanc chooses to ignore these earlier sonatas with chords in his attack on those of Le Clair! He also ignores the numerous double-stops in Marais's *pièces*.



Test a pitch (without appearing to do so) to make it perfect, and then press the string as much as you want, and you can only draw a sound sweetly, but the execution which begins by pressing the string insolently is more brutal than spirited. If the true pitch can be found by chance, one goes ahead; "Stop!" say I, "is it worth while to have any concealed mistakes?"

M. Le Cler, suppressing the arrogance of the Harpsichord which boasted so of the lifted hand in which it has all the chords, posed these facts for him: "For all the thirds that the pleasure book of the *Enfants de Latone*<sup>46</sup> considers desirable, you and the Organ play  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them out of tune. A fine ear could only hear the player (in order to render justice to both if the player is skillful) by ignoring the poor intonation in the instrument and relating to the harmony that the ear makes out of so many chords (which would otherwise make the delicate listener impatient rather than pleasing his ear)."

The Keyboard is exactly like that discourse of the Antipodes in the Laconic style, about which so much sport was made in Sparta,<sup>47</sup> in which the middle renders the beginning false, and the end, the middle. When everything is tuned at once it is certain that the last tones touched will contradict the first. And, to top it off, there is no capacity for returning during a concert, in contrast to which, on instruments with moveable pegs, the tuning can be adjusted for each tonality in which one is going to play and the saddle can be adjusted as needed for each horse.

It is the divine art of M. Blavet to remedy this on the flute through modifications of the breath. Thus, students of the harpsichord, when they congratulate themselves that it is always in tune, do not even hear that it is never so.<sup>48</sup>

The Viol, after such efforts to do it a disservice had been made during its absence, without its having known anything about it, returned from a journey like that made by Juno in the *Iliad*,

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<sup>46</sup>Séré de Rieux, *Les dons des Enfants de Latone. La Musique et le Chasse du Cerf*, 1734.

<sup>47</sup>The description seems to fit the Paradoxes of Zeno, a demonstration of false logic by Zeno of Elea, which prompted Timon of Philius to write "The two-edged tongue of mighty Zeno, who, say what one would, would argue it untrue." Zeno, however, upset Athens, not Sparta.

<sup>48</sup>The tuning of the harpsichord would have been the same problem in Marais's *pièces*, of course, but Le Blanc seizes the opportunity to discuss a problem which gives him great concern.

during which Jupiter had turned his eyes to the Scythians who lived on milk, and who needed neither entrées nor side dishes (as we do to excite the appetite—that is to say, to give the cannon more charge than it normally carries).<sup>49</sup>

On its return, the Viol experienced the adventure of Hermodorus, whose soul, subjected to long voyages, left his body without feeling, worse than in Epilepsy (when at least the pulse beats). One day, when the celebration had lasted too long, the soul returned to find that the sword had lost its sheath, for the body had been burned in accordance with the ancient custom. It was the same wherever the Viol had been well received before her travels—everywhere she went to present herself, a uniform response, admirably concise, was made: "*I do not know you.*"

Some, more charitable, referred her to the Hall to prove her rights, to renew her alliances, or to see about debating it—just as Queen Anne dismissed Prince Eugene to Utrecht when he ceased to speak in his own name (having received great honor in his own right).<sup>50</sup>

The Viol did not hesitate, as you can imagine, to find out in detail all that had happened in her absence. She hurried to Forcroi's house at Mantes<sup>51</sup> to beg him to make the ultimate efforts, as generals take advantage of the appearance of the situation (like Caesar at Munda, when otherwise everything would have been lost).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Le Blanc became somewhat sidetracked in his digression here; he began by referring to Jupiter's infidelity during Juno's absence, but apparently the mention of the barbarian Scythians who lived on shepherd's fare reminded him of the excesses of modern life, and he could not resist the opportunity to contrast the "natural" Noble Savage with the over-refined Parisian.

<sup>50</sup>Prince Eugene of Savoy, a brilliant Austrian general in the War of the Spanish Succession, had been very successful in campaigns with Marlborough against the French in 1709. When Marlborough fell out of favor in England, Prince Eugene made an unsuccessful visit to negotiate with the Queen on his behalf, under orders from the Austrian Emperor, in the hope of restoring the English alliance with Austria. The series of treaties ending the war were signed at Utrecht and Raastadt in the years 1712-1714.

<sup>51</sup>Forqueray, whose career had begun as a child prodigy in 1676 at the age of five, had retired in 1736 to Mantes, where he died in 1745.

<sup>52</sup>The Battle of Munda in 45 B. C. was Caesar's last great victory. In the course of the battle, a movement by Caesar's troops was misinterpreted by Pompey as a withdrawal; he sought to pursue his supposed advantage, and Caesar seized the new situation to break the lines of his opponent and win the victory.

Forcroi responded that he was in pain even greater than that of Achilles when, finding himself without arms, he saw himself urged by Thetis to rescue the body of the unfortunate Ménécide.<sup>53</sup> How could he resolve to exhibit the merit of the Viol and have it heard when the field of battle is set in the vast hollowness of a hall whose size is appalling and where it would be impossible to have sufficient strength of lung!

The Viol, more furious with the behavior of the French than with the actions of Forcroi, could not avoid going through the mortifying experience of finding herself in front of the Hall where a third *concert spirituel* was to be held, and of appearing there in the role of an unknown face, which, if admitted, would perhaps be in the way, or who would not be too sure that she deserved to be let in.

The reason for Lamentations was pitiful, like that of Marius at the ruins of Carthage,<sup>54</sup> which she compared to her own ruin as she faced it dejectly. The Viol had seen herself favored by King Louis XIV in his foster-children, Marais senior for his *pièces* and Forcroi senior for his preludes based on the sonata. The one had been declared to play like an Angel, the other like the Devil. The Regent of the Kingdom had devoted himself to possessing the Viol, and the King Louis XV valued her pleasure. The memory was renewed of the sweet trial of feeling the royal bow pass deliciously over her. Was it necessary to depart from such advantages, to fall into nothingness? What a fall! Had there ever been an equal to it? "The fall of Phaeton and that of Vulcan (who were even higher, for it took longer to come to earth by such a dangerous route), were they," said the Viol, "anything but feeble reflections of my fall!"

Meanwhile, the Violin and the Violoncello arrived at the door

<sup>53</sup>Ménécide is another name for Achilles' friend Patroclus, killed by Hector at the walls of Troy.

<sup>54</sup>Gaius Marius (155-86 B. C.) was a great Roman general who fell from power and was outlawed by Sulla. He fled to Carthage, which had been utterly destroyed after the Third Punic War in 146 B. C. An attempt to plant a new colony there in 122 B. C. had collapsed, largely because the site was considered cursed and the omens unpropitious. Marius had scarcely arrived in this desolate place when a messenger was sent to tell him that, as an enemy of Rome, he was unwelcome. Plutarch says, "He answered, 'Go tell the governor that you have seen Gaius Marius sitting in exile among the ruins of Carthage'; appositely applying the example of the fortune of that city to the change of his own condition."

of the Concert Hall. They did not need feet to carry them there; they flew over the horizon, gliding upright, like the Angels in Milton;<sup>55</sup> and the word came forth from their bellies as if from the bodies of the possessed, who sometimes have spoken clearly without moving their lips.

Lady Viola da Gamba stopped Sultan Violin as he came to the *concert spirituel*. She had a great desire to converse with him in an avenue of those gardens so far above those of Alcynous,<sup>56</sup> to try to persuade him to a compromise that was not so noisy. But Don Violin, realizing his advantages, showed himself to be intractable, as were the people of Athens to the Lacedaemonians when they had some advantage.<sup>57</sup> He pretended to invite the Viol to enter with all the *grazioso* of which he was capable, adding "Madame, when one is as charming as you, one is so everywhere and in all places."

Lady Music, concerned lest the Viola da Gamba be banished (as Greece was that Athens not be destroyed, as if she would have had to lose an eye) came down from Olympus and showed herself to the Viol, without being seen by the Violin or being heard by him. "Take good care," she said to her, "about committing your ancient glory to the exercise of your talents in a great place which is as favorable to the Violin as it is unfavorable to you. Cite the two Minervas of Athens and make a distinction between the two kinds of Harmony." She disappeared with these words.

The Viola da Gamba, refusing to enter, said to the Violin, "Noble Sir, I don't intend to dispute my rights like a speech-maker at the door, but you aren't so particular as all that. You play in the air of huge places, homes of the Opera, the Comedy or the itinerant theaters, bare to the open sky."

<sup>55</sup>So numberless were those bad Angels seen  
Hovering on wing under the Cope of Hell  
'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding Fires;  
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted Spear  
Of their great Sultan waving to direct  
Their course, in even ballance down they light  
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain."

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 1

Milton's Sultan of course is Satan; Le Blanc's, the Violin.

<sup>56</sup>The Gardens of the Tuileries, which Le Blanc compares here to the gardens of the Phaeacian King Alcynous, just outside the court of the palace, where Ulysses came after his ship was wrecked.

<sup>57</sup>In the Peloponnesian Wars.

"Madame," the Violin answered her, "you always had more words than facility of hand at your command for arousing interest in you when you rose in the world in the old days, putting on airs and using all the affectations of a bluestocking. Today you try to refuse to recognize the jurisdiction of the court and seek to elude the attack."

The Lords and Ladies who had come to the concert, enjoying the quarrel, gave ear to it as willingly as they would have to the music. They were supplied with court-benches for hearing and deciding, like the Swiss Regiments holding a Council of War at the Place de Lille, examining a lawsuit, rendering a judgement, and seeing to it that the sentence was executed without bothering to move away.

"If you really have true merit," continued the Viol, "why do you resort to stratagem as you do? Was Charles XII an Alexander [the Great] when he sought to supplant force by negotiation?"<sup>58</sup>

"When is there less resort to a stratagem," responded the Violin, "than when you attack your adversary anytime, anyplace, as I attack you, never alleging, as you do, that I don't have it in hand, that I am not in the mood, that I am cold, that I lack practice, or that memory fails me?"

"What else is it," replied the Viol, "but the most odious trick, to make the merit of an instrument consist in filling up the hollowness of a vast place, in which *you* have introduced the practice of displaying a big sound. What, shall we let strength of lung be confused with the goodness of reason! Do the refined strokes of the palm of the hand<sup>59</sup> yield to forced playing? O Stentor with the breath of Boreas,<sup>60</sup> was the esteem of the Greeks won by natural

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<sup>58</sup>Charles XII of Sweden, who made war against Denmark, Poland, and Russia in the Great Northern War (1699-1718), and adamantly refused to make any compromises with his opponents with the result that numerous opportunities for a favorable peace in his last campaigns collapsed. His one real effort to use diplomacy to accomplish his ends and to bring the Turkish Sultan to his side was not completely in good faith and resulted in disaster. He was ultimately killed in battle.

<sup>59</sup>This is a reference to the way the viola da gamba is bowed.

<sup>60</sup>Stentor was a herald with a loud voice in the Iliad. Boreas was the Greek God of the North Wind.

reasoning or by the vehemence of Demades and Demosthenes,<sup>61</sup> who did not even have the lungs of iron and throat of bronze that you and the Trumpet do."

Great applause arose. The Lords clapped their hands, and the Ladies (whose right it was to forgive, as the Vestals did Circe) passed their verdict aloud from one to another, saying that the good reasons declaimed modestly [by the Viol] did not yield to the pressure of having bad things said impudently about them. (But they did not judge with the enlightened eyes of the Kings and their courts, who had never been so quick to amaze by rumours, to accuse on that basis, or to be swept away by them.)

The Ladies thus gave the Viola da Gamba the encouragement so celebrated in England.<sup>62</sup>

The Viol, continuing, used this simile: "Two master sculptors in Athens each made a statue of Minerva. When they were carried to a place before the people, one had characteristics so coarse that it aroused as much indignation as admiration, and the other was so delicate that it received unbounded applause. The sculptor who did not have the scoffers on his side alleged that the rules said the Minervas were to be judged put in place. But that was high up on a building. Not unnaturally enough, the statue which was ugly close up was made charming by the distance, and the characteristics of the dainty piece were effaced.

"That is what the Violin does. It tries to procure itself a big space where it keeps itself far from the listeners. It can deceive them or its sour tone can be absorbed by all their numerous clothes. But is it forgotten that the fine engraving on the Carnelian of the King [the King's Seal] (called the Seal of Michaelangelo), since it has to be looked at close up, would lose its prize if opposed by the big sculpture of a portal which tolerated and indeed required being seen from a distance? Why thus, with a kind of obstinacy, sanction the harshness of the Violin's melody as opposed

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<sup>61</sup>Athenian orators and adversaries. Though Demosthenes is remembered as a great statesman, Demades was as unscrupulous as he was eloquent. A decree engineered by Demades resulted in Demosthenes's death, so the pairing of the names here is ironic.

<sup>62</sup>England had been the greatest bastion of viol playing in the seventeenth century, though this was no longer so.

to the Viol's tenderness? Who is it who makes it impressive to the whole Nation, if not the whimsy of fickle change."

The Ladies heard the reasoning of the Viola da Gamba with satisfaction—the more so because she was doubly useful to them, since she combined so well with their voices or in solos with a Harpsichord played with their touch so delicate.

(To Be Continued)

## Traditions of Solo Viol Playing in France and the Music of Morel

MARY CYR

More than a decade after Marin Marais's death Hubert Le Blanc praised him as the finest virtuoso of the viol and the founder of the French school of viol playing. "L'empire de la viole," wrote Le Blanc in his *Défense de la basse de viole*. . . (1740), "étoit fondé et puissamment établi par le Père Marais. . ."<sup>1</sup> Although facing decline after the middle of the 18th century, the viol had enjoyed brilliant stardom for over a century in France.

Little solo music has survived from the early 17th century, but the names of eminent performers such as André Maugars and Nicolas Hotman have come down to us, and Mersenne<sup>2</sup> describes for us their incomparable playing of divisions and mastery of "délicatesse et de suavité" in bowing. Maugars was praised particularly for his execution of difficult chordal pieces with rapid and intricate ornamentation. Of Hotman's excellent performances Jacques de Gouy wrote, "il est impossible de pouvoir mieux faire."<sup>3</sup> Hotman played the theorbo as well and was one of the first in France to adopt tablature notation for the viol and to compose solo music for the instrument. Unfortunately, very little of his music can be traced today.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest surviving collection of solo viol music is that of Dubuisson, whose performances with Ronsin and Pierrot on three viols were noted by a reviewer in the *Mercure galant* as the first of

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1. Hubert Le Blanc, *Défense de la basse de viole contre les entrées du violon et les prétentions du violoncel* (Amsterdam, 1740), p. 28.

2. Marin Mersenne, *Harmonicorum Instrumentorum* (Paris, 1636) Liber Primus, proposition 30, p. 47.

3. Jacques de Gouy, *Airs à quatre parties, sur la paraphrase des psaumes* (Paris, 1650), preface.

4. Surviving compositions by Hotman include an "allemande de hautemant" for theorbo (Vm<sup>76265</sup>) and another allemande for lute (Vm<sup>7675</sup>) in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. A "gigue d'Hotman transposée du théorbe" is found on p. 3 of the collection of Vaudry de Saizenay (1699), Ms. 279.152, Bibliothèque Municipale, Besançon. As for his music for viol, a suite in tablature by "Mons. Hotman" in a manuscript dated 1674 (folios 266'-270) includes an allemande, courant, sarabande, and courant with its "variatio" (Rés. 1111, B.N., Paris).

their type in France.<sup>5</sup> The small manuscript, now in the Library of Congress,<sup>6</sup> includes exclusively solo music—four suites in staff notation and two pieces in tablature. Though not technically demanding, these suites illustrate many features of the French school of playing which reached fruition later in the century: a predilection for sonorous chords supporting a melody above, polyphonic writing, and bowings, fingerings, and intricate ornamentation carefully indicated by signs.

Written about the same time as the Dubuisson manuscript, or perhaps a few years later, the compositions of Sainte-Colombe, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, form the largest surviving manuscript of French viol music of the 17th century.<sup>7</sup> The collection is composed entirely of duets for two bass viols, although Sainte-Colombe, like Dubuisson, was well-known for his concerts of three viols (1 treble and 2 basses) which he gave with his two daughters. The pieces (or "concerts") are grouped into the major and minor modes on D, G, and C, and many bear fanciful titles (such as "Appel de Charon" or "le trembleur"). The programmatic "Tombeau Les Regrets" includes several sections of varying moods: "Quarillon," "Les Pleurs," "Joye des Elizées," and "Les Elizées." A pupil of Hotman, Sainte-Colombe became the teacher of a generation of excellent performers, the most famous of whom was Marais. Among his other pupils were Meliton, who, according to Jean Rousseau, knew "parfaitement le caractère de la viole,"<sup>8</sup> and for whom Marais composed a *tombeau* for two bass viols (*I<sup>er</sup> livre*, 1686), as well as Des Fontaines, Danoville, and Jean Rousseau, who credited Sainte-Colombe with the adoption of the low A or seventh string<sup>9</sup> and the use of wire on all but the top three strings.

Beginning with the traditions of Sainte-Colombe and Hotman, Marais set new goals of technical perfection and expressive nuance. "Personne n'a surpassé Marais," wrote Daquin, "[et] un seul homme l'a égalé, c'est le fameux

5. *Mercurie galant*, March, 1680.

6. M2.1 T217C

7. Rés. Vma. ms. 866. The music of Sainte-Colombe, copied in a single hand, is found on pp. 1-165; pp. 185-435 consist of airs from 19 operas of Lully (table, pp. 471-75).

8. François Lesure, "Une querelle sur le jeu de la viole en 1688: J. Rousseau contre DeMachy," *Revue de Musicologie*, XLVI (1960), p. 186.

9. used in several of the duets of Sainte-Colombe.

Forqueray."<sup>10</sup> Forqueray's flamboyant playing was self-taught, modeled upon that of the virtuoso Italian violinists, while Marais's delicate, sweet style preserved its French origins. According to Le Blanc, "l'un... [joue] comme un Ange, & l'autre comme un Diable."<sup>11</sup>

In his five books for viol Marais presents collections of pieces for players of varying abilities, explaining his own style of playing and how his signs are to be interpreted. Marais's music became the model for the succeeding generation of viol players, among them his young pupil, Jacques Morel. The son of a bookseller, Morel served as a *page de la musique du Roi* in his youth, and it was probably during the time spent at court that he benefited from the tutelage of Marais. In 1709 he published his *I<sup>er</sup> livre de pièces de viole*, dedicating it to "Monsieur Marais Ordinaire de la Musique de la Chambre du Roi."

Morel's four suites in A minor, D minor, D major, and G major—the same keys as those of Dubuisson—are all intended for the seven-string bass viol. Each suite begins with a chordal prelude, longer and more melodic than those of Dubuisson, and includes an allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue. Like Marais, he also inserts several other movements, in suites 3 and 4 between the prelude and allemande ("Boutade [whim, caprice] de Saint-Germain" in no. 3 and "Fantaisie" in no. 4), and two or more movements following the gigue, either named for their type of dance (menuet, gavotte) or with titles such as "La Fanchonette" (Fanny; also kerchief), "Echos de Fontainebleau," or "La Guerandoise." Suite no. 2 includes a set of variations on the popular *folia* pattern ("Le Folet").<sup>12</sup> The collection ends with a "chaconne en trio pour une flute traversière, une violle, et la basse continue," in which the upper part, like that of Marais's trios of 1692, may be played on either violin or treble viol instead of flute.

The text of the dedication reveals his admiration for Marais. He apologizes for the close proximity of his publication to those of Marais, but having been Marais's pupil for a long time and

10. Pierre Louis Daquin, *Siècle littéraire de Louis XV ou lettres sur les hommes célèbres* (Amsterdam, 1754), part I, pp. 142-3.

11. Le Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

12. Marais had included a set of "folies" variations in his second book, 1701.



gained his approval for these pieces, he acknowledges his debt to the master:

C'est estre bien hardi que d'ôser donner au public des pieces de Violle après celles dont vous l'avés enrichi, et qui font tous les jours le charme des oreilles les plus délicates. Mais, Monsieur, j'ai eu le précieux avantage d'estre vostre Ecolier, et je me suis appliqué longtemps à étudier ce genie incomparable que vous avés receu du Ciel. J'ay donc cru que les transports que vous m'avés causés, auroient pû exciter en moy quelque petite partie de cet enthousiasme qu'on admire en vous, et qui a produit ces chants merveilleux, et si dignes de la Lyre d'Apollon même. Mais ce qui m'a le plus encouragé, Monsieur, c'est que vous m'avés pas desaprouvé des premiers essais, et qu'on peut esperer que ce qui ne vous a pas deplu aura de quoi plaire a tout le monde. Si les chants que j'ai trouvés ont quelqu'agrément, et quelque naturel, c'est a vous que je les dois, et je vous les consacre pour vous marquer ma reconnoissance, et pour donner un témoignage public de l'admiration que j'ai pour vous, et du respect avec lequel je suis, Monsieur, vostre très humble et très obeïssant serviteur **MOREL**.

Many details of bowing, fingering, and ornamentation are modeled upon Marais's works. He explains in the *avertissement* that he has tried to include only a few chords, preferring to give the melody without rendering the pieces difficult. For those who prefer harmony, however, he has included some pieces more chordal than the others. His ornament signs conform to those of Marais, "ne pouvant mieux faire que de me conformer à sa manière."

While in spirit Morel's volume closely reflects the precedent of Marais's works, it also introduces several novelties. Its format, in score rather than separate parts for solo viol and continuo, is entirely new, as Morel explains, "pour la commodité de ceux qui voudront les jouer au clavecin." While the pieces of Marais's books published before that of Morel are grouped by mode, with several dances of each type and several preludes as well, Morel's pieces are arranged into suites of one dance of each type in a determined order.

The name Morel appears frequently among lists of musicians of the 17th and 18th centuries. Antoine Morel (fl. ca. 1669-81), a French singer (*basse-taille*) was a member of the royal chapel from 1669 and later succeeded Nicolaus Hédouin at the opera. In 1675

he created the role of Arcas in Lully's *Thésée*, and in 1681 was the *Indien chantant* in the première of Lully's *Le triomphe de l'amour*. In 1648 an organist named Christophe Morel was living in Paris, and in 1703 René Morel was a *maître de musique* there.<sup>13</sup> Later in the 18th century a harpsichord maker by the name of Morel (fl. 1772-77) lived in Paris on the rue Quincampoix.<sup>14</sup> From the little surviving information, it has thus far proved impossible to connect Jacques Morel with any of the other known musicians of this surname. It is even uncertain whether he was related to "Le Sieur Morel, former organist at Soissons," whose book of pieces for the 5-string *pardessus de viole* was announced in December, 1749 in the *Mercure de France*:

Le Sieur Morel, ci-devant Organiste à Soissons, & actuellement demeurant à Paris, rue du Petit Reposier, à la Grace de Dieu, proche la Place des Victoires, donne avis au Public qu'il a fait graver un petit ouvrage pour le pardessus de Voile à cinq cordes, dont il donne des leçons à Paris. Son ouvrage se distribue chez lui & aussi dans la rue St. Honoré, à la Régle d'Or, ainsi que dans la rue du Roule, à la Croix d'Or.<sup>15</sup>

The only contemporary account of Jacques Morel is that of Johann Gottfield Walther, who included him, without first name, in his *Musicalisches lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732):

Morel, ein Franzose, hat, unter dem Titul: les Thuilleries, ein Cantaten-Werck publiciret s. Boivins Music-Catalogum aus Jahr 1729 zu Paris in 8<sup>vo</sup> gedruckt, p. 10. ingleichen das Te Deum laudamus in Französischer Sprache, mit Music versehen, drucken lassen. *ibid.* p. 13. auch ein Viol di gampen-Werck herausgegeben. *ibid.* p. 32.<sup>16</sup>

His French translation (with music) of the *Te Deum* (Paris, 1706) was dedicated to the Duc d'Aumont and his volume of cantatas entitled *Les Thuilleries* appeared several years after the pieces for viol. In 1730 his privilege to publish "des pièces de viole et autres

13. *Musiciens de Paris 1535-1792* (Paris, 1965) pp. 220-21.

14. *ibid.*

15. *Mercure de France*, December, 1749, p. 153.

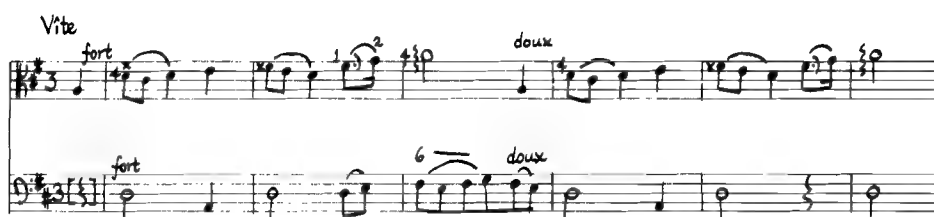
16. Johann Gottfield Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732), pp. 421-2.

pièces de musique" was renewed and the *1<sup>er</sup> livre* was reprinted at that time.<sup>17</sup>

Of particular interest for the interpretation of Morel's pieces, and for those of Marais as well, is a manuscript copy made, in all probability, early in the 18th century, now in the Bibliothèque de Toulouse.<sup>18</sup> The manuscript consists of 33 folios in-4°, copied throughout in one hand, most likely that of a viol player for he has notated Morel's signs, carefully adding occasional fingerings and other marks which are not found in the print. In the lower left corner of folio 2 the signature ("Ravoy"? "Bardy"? ) appears, perhaps that of a later owner of the collection.

The order of Morel's pieces is preserved with a single exception: the gigue of the first suite appears following the allemande rather than the sarabande as in the print. Most of the copyist's additions are fingerings which complete, but occasionally also substitute for, those of Morel. For the movement entitled "Echos de Fontainebleau" (suite no. 3), the copyist has added a tempo mark, "vîte," which was absent in the original (Example 1).

Example 1. "Echos de Fontainebleau"



17. See the copy formerly owned by Clérambault, which bears his signature and is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Rés. 856. A few alterations in the volume suggest another printing ("Gravé par M. Barlion" was removed from the title page, "fin" was added to the end of a piece on page 44, and the date in the privilege was removed on the last page).

18. This manuscript was discovered by Professor Alan Curtis of the University of California at Berkeley, who has also kindly offered advice and assistance for the present study.

The prelude of suite no. 3 is given on this page, serving as merely a sample of the melodic gift of Morel. Rich in double stops, yet simple and meditative, it has an appealing charm, and makes an enticing introduction to the succeeding movements. It may also serve here to introduce an unjustly neglected volume of delightful music.



**Diego Ortiz's Principles of Ornamentation for the Viol:  
Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de  
puntos en la musica de violones**

JULIA ANN GRIFFIN

The modern viol player seeking to give authentic performances of 16th-century music is faced with the difficult problem of reconciling the appearance of the music on the printed (or manuscript) page with the form it took during performances of the time. One of the most crucial problems in the study of performance practices is that of ornamentation, and in this respect Diego Ortiz's work *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas y otros generos de puntos en la musica de violones* (Treatise on the Ornamentation of Cadences and Other Kinds of Notes in Viol Music) is of immense value to the modern performer. This treatise represents the culmination of a productive tradition of improvisatory embellishment of a melodic line. It is devoted entirely to various types of ornamentation to be performed on the viol (either in a consort of viols or with harpsichord accompaniment), but is a classification and explication of the already popular techniques of diminution, rather than the presentation of a new practice. This work, and the less complete discussions which preceded it, signal the end of a tradition, rather than the beginning. They represent the end of the truly improvised addition of diminutions to a melodic line, and the beginning of the careful addition of previously composed diminutions.

As it was generally acknowledged in the early Renaissance that there was little or no difference between the types of ornamentation used in vocal and instrumental performances. It was not until the second half of the 16th century that the viol began to be discussed separately from the voice and other instruments. In fact, Ortiz's work seems to be the first addressed exclusively to viol players. Two viol tutors which precede Ortiz's both link the viol to other instruments. The first, *Musica Teusch auf die Instrument der grossen und kleynen Geygen, auch Lautten* (Nuremberg, 1532), by Hans Gerle, was written for both viols and lutes. In addition, the work was intended for the beginning player, and deals only superficially with the use of diminutions. Gerle provides a few examples of diminutions in lute (or gamba) tablature, but he is concerned chiefly with imparting the basic essentials of performance.

The next tutor for the viol, *Regola Rubertina* (Venice, 1542), written by Sylvestro Ganassi, provides an indirect explication of the techniques of ornamentation used in viol playing. Ganassi states in the third chapter of this two-volume work, "Cerca il diminuire non diro altro perche serai satisfatto del tutto per l'altra mia opera ditta fontegara." (About diminution I will say no more because you will be completely satisfied by my other work, called Fontegara.) The other work to which Ganassi refers is his *Opera intitulata fontegara*, a tutor for the recorder, published in Venice in 1535. On the title page of this book, Ganassi informs the reader that the diminutions which he presents within the tutor will be useful "ad ogni instrumento di fiato e chorde: et anchor a chi si diletta di canto" (for every wind and string instrument, and also for one who delights in song). Since Ganassi refers the viol player directly to this earlier flute tutor, it is logical that this work should be considered in seeking to clarify diminution practices used in viol playing of the period.

Ganassi admits that his treatment of diminutions consists of compilation rather than discovery. In his dedication he says, "With much labor and exertion I have compiled it from a countless number of writings and I have worded it as clearly and concisely as possible." The Ganassi treatise is very highly organized. First he enumerates the three elements of a diminution: time signature, rhythm, and melodic shape. He then classifies the diminutions according to four qualities; the diminutions are either simple (*semplice*), compound (*composto*), particular (*particolare*) or general (*generale*). These qualities are seen in relation to each of the three aspects of a diminution. Thus, "simple" refers to identical time signatures, identical note values, and identical melodic shape. The term "compound" refers to changes of time signature, dissimilar note values, and dissimilar melodic patterns. Then, a diminution in which two of its elements are simple and the third is compound, is called a "particular simple" diminution (Ex. 1a), and a diminution in which all three of its elements are simple is called "general simple." (Ex. 1b) Likewise, a diminution in which two of the three elements are compound, and the third is simple is called "particular compound," (Ex. 1c) and a compound diminution in which all three of its elements are compound is called "general compound." (Ex. 1d) The author then gives eight examples of diminutions classified according to these principles. Before proceeding with his instructions for ornamentation, Ganassi makes a few observations about desirable and undesirable practices. Ideally the dimi-

nution should begin and end on the same notes as the unornamented ground, or at the octave. Ganassi suggests varying the beginning and end of a diminution with syncopation. He also states that the performer should not worry about errors in counterpoint since they pass quickly in diminutions.

### Simple and Compound Diminution



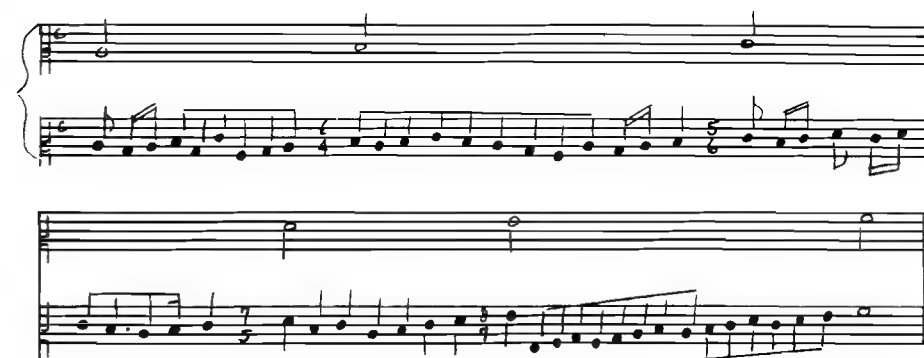
Ex. 1a. Particular simple diminution



Ex. 1b. General simple diminution



Ex. 1c. Particular compound diminution



Ex. 1d. General compound diminution

The author organizes his presentation of the techniques of diminution into four "rules" (*regole*). The first of these deals with straightforward diminutions, while the final three involve the use of proportions. Each rule contains ornamentations of melodic intervals and of cadences. Within each rule the intervals are arranged methodically from seconds to fifths, both ascending and descending, with numerous examples of each unornamented interval and its diminutions. For instance, in the first rule there are from nine to fourteen unornamented examples for each interval, with eight or more ornamented solutions for each of the unornamented examples. Such a variety of unornamented versions of each interval arises from Ganassi's frequent use of intervening notes between the notes forming the interval. Affirming the semibreve as the beat, the author explains in his thirteenth chapter, "dato che il piu deli cātori & sonatori nō cōsiderano altro che lo acomodarsi dela batuda p tanto farai nel modo che a te piacerà." (Since most of the singers and players do not consider anything other than coming out right with the beat, you may do as you please.) Thus the interval to be embellished is that between the first and last notes of the melodic configurations in Ganassi's examples, and the inclusion of the intervening notes in the diminutions is optional. At the end of each rule, having demonstrated each ascending and descending interval from a second to a fifth, Ganassi presents unornamented cadences, with various ornamented solutions for each one.

While the diminutions Ganassi provides under the first rule are imaginative and florid, they are rhythmically uncomplicated. In the next three sections, however, the author demonstrates proportional diminutions of the same unornamented formulas. Dismissing as theoretical any explanation of proportions, Ganassi proceeds to

their use in diminutions. The second rule deals with diminutions in *proportio sesquiquarta*; that is, five semiminims in the time of four. In the third rule, he illustrates *proportio sesquialtera*, in which six semiminims are heard in the time of four; and finally, in the fourth rule, he demonstrates what he describes as a rather difficult and special proportion: *proportio supertripartiens quartas*; that is seven semiminims in the time of four. For this final set of diminutions Ganassi gives only half as many examples, presumably suggesting that the greater difficulty will result in less frequent use of this particular species of diminution. In concluding his discussion of diminution, Ganassi also mentions *proportio dupla*, but he merely refers the reader to the first rule, instructing him to double the note values and to consider the breve the beat. Ganassi notes that each interval can be ornamented in many ways, at the performer's choice, and asserts that he does not want to limit that choice. His examples are to be considered as guidelines, rather than mandatory solutions. Ganassi illustrates his point about the variety of possible solutions for any given example by including with his treatise a collection of 300 cadences (175 of which have survived) on a six-note theme.

While Ganassi's treatise provides much valuable information about the performance of ornamentation on the viol, the *Tra-tado de glosas* of Diego Ortiz provides an even fuller understanding of the use of diminution. In fact it represents a highpoint in 16th-century discourses on ornamentation for the viol. Its importance for the modern viol player is heightened in that it is addressed specifically to viol players and deals exclusively with ornamentation, leaving the fundamentals of viol playing to the tutors.<sup>1</sup>

Although he was born in Toledo, Spain, Ortiz spent almost all of his adult life in Italy, first in Rome, and then in Naples. His *Tra-tado di glosas* was published in Rome, in both Spanish and Italian, in 1553.<sup>2</sup> Ortiz's treatise clarifies the techniques of improvised dim-

inutions used in the first half of the 16th century, and it also moves one step beyond Ganassi towards the end of improvised ornamentation. While Ganassi was careful not to limit his readers to the examples he provided, Ortiz states in his preface that one must take the line which he wishes to vary and write it out again, inserting appropriate formulas from Ortiz's tables of diminutions. He further emphasizes this statement by deploring the practice of ornamenting a composition by ear. Ortiz does discuss the improvisation of fantasias on the viol, but clearly the emphasis is shifting towards a more precise, less spontaneous style of diminution. Like Ganassi, Ortiz asserts that the last note of a diminution should be the same as that in the unornamented version; and he, too, advises the reader that he need not worry about errors in counterpoint, since they pass very quickly.

A few major differences between the treatises of Ganassi and Ortiz are apparent. Most obviously Ortiz's work proceeds beyond the abstract illustration of the techniques of diminution to their actual application in performance. The first volume provides diminutions of intervals and of cadences to be used when performing in a consort of viols. The second volume, however, draws from the first, applying solutions found in the interval and cadence tables of the first volume to actual compositions for performance by solo viol with harpsichord accompaniment. A second difference is the greater importance granted to the cadence in the later treatise. Besides being the only type of diminution specifically mentioned in the title of the work, the cadence occupies a place of prominence at the beginning of the first volume. In addition, Ortiz demonstrates a larger number of cadences, with many more ornamented versions per cadence. For some cadences he gives over twenty variant diminutions. A third difference is visible in their treatment of melodic intervals. While according to Ganassi notes could be interpolated between the principal notes of the unornamented interval without changing the value of the interval, for Ortiz the interval to be ornamented involves only the two notes forming the interval. Ortiz also adds a third element to the organization of the interval to be embellished. While Ganassi arranges the intervals according to the size of the interval and its direction (rising or falling), Ortiz refines this organization to include differing temporal values of the first note of the interval. Thus Ortiz illustrates methods of "glossing" a rising third of a breve, a semibreve, or a minim. In general Ortiz's diminutions are less complicated than those ad-

<sup>1</sup>Even in this treatise the interchangeability of vocal and instrumental practice is acknowledged. Ortiz states that from his book one may learn how to vary a voice for playing or singing.

<sup>2</sup>The Italian edition was entitled *Il primo libro di Diego Ortiz Tolletano nel qual si tratta delle glose sopra le cadenze & al tre sorte de punti in la Musica del Violone*. Max Schneider published a modern edition and German translation (Kassel: Barenreiter-Verlag, 1936), and an English translation, by Peter Farrell, appeared in the 1967 issue of this journal.



vocated by Ganassi. (Ex. 2) Ortiz does not classify his diminutions, and he makes almost no use of proportions. He does add one new element by including diminutions for a rising and falling five-note scale.

### Diminutions of a rising fourth



Ex. 2a. Ganassi, *Opera intitolata fontegara*. Regola Prima



Ex. 2b. Ortiz, *Tratado de glosas*

It is the second volume of the Ortiz treatise which offers the modern performer concrete information for authentic performances of 16th-century viol music. Here, with actual composition, Ortiz demonstrates how the ornamented cadences and intervals are to be inserted into a given melody, and he explains the interaction between the harpsichordist and the viol player. Ortiz recognizes three legitimate methods of playing the viol and the harpsichord together. The first is the improvisation of a fantasia, in which the harpsichordist plays simple consonant chords above which the viol player improvises. The author offers four examples of the viol part of such a fantasia, but he does not include the harpsichord part,

nor does he comment on the structure of such an improvisatory piece, or on how one is to avoid cacaphony. Ortiz's second method of combining harpsichord and viol is labelled *sobre canto llano* (over a cantus firmus). Ortiz demonstrates this method with six recercadas over a Spagna bass; but he provides a more specific illustration of this technique at the end of this second book, giving examples of recercadas over chordally harmonized tenors. He explains that the ideal method of performance over a cantus firmus is as he has presented it here, with four-voice harmony played by the harpsichord, and the recercada drawn freely from the four voices. He adds, however, that one can play his examples over the cantus firmus alone, because the counterpoint between the recercada and the cantus firmus is perfect.

The final method, and the one which has the most relevance for the modern performer, is designated *sobre cosas compuestas* (over composed pieces). Four recercadas on Arcadelt's madrigal *O felici occhi miei* and four on Pierre Sandrin's chanson *Doulce memoire* illustrate this final method of combining harpsichord and viol. Here the harpsichordist plays all voices of the composition, while the viol player applies diminutions to each voice in turn. When the viol player ornaments the top voice of the composition, however, the harpsichordist is advised to omit that voice. In addition to the diminution of the existing voices, Ortiz demonstrates the addition of a fifth voice to a four-voice composition. He employs the same techniques of deriving an ornamented melody, but he draws the notes and intervals from any sounding voice, rather than following a single voice throughout.

Clearly, in the two volumes of Ortiz's treatise, the modern viol player has at his disposition an invaluable source for bridging the gap between extant 16th-century music as it appears on the page and as it must have been performed in its own period. The tables of the first volume provide the diminutions themselves, and the compositions in the second volume demonstrate exactly how the diminutions were applied in performance.



### PEGGIE SAMPSON

Peggie Sampson began her career as a cellist. Her first studies were with the Portuguese virtuoso Mme. Guilhermina Suggia. Further study was undertaken at Edinburgh University where Dr. Sampson pursued the bachelor of music program under Professor Donald Tovey. Further study of the cello took place under Diran Alexanian and later, Emanuel Feuermann. Her professional activities included academic teaching, solo, chamber, and some orchestral playing. In 1951 she came to Canada and about 10 years later bought a viola da gamba. She became active in performances on the viola da gamba as a member of the Manitoba University Consort. In time she devoted herself entirely to performance on the viola da gamba. Peggie Sampson moved to York University in Toronto where presently she is active as a teacher and performer. She includes among her activities the editing of music for the viola da gamba.

## Correspondence

Sir,

In your issue No. 8 of 1971 you carried an article on page 29 by Henry Burnett entitled "THE VARIOUS MEANINGS OF THE TERM 'VIOLONE' ". May I, as author of *Die Geschichte des Kontrabasses* (Tutzing, 1970), comment on the above article.

1. "The fact that the violone as seen in Italian chamber music was meant to be some form of 'cello, there can be little doubt." I am very dubious about this view. It is in contradiction to all the information we have about the period in question and subsequently, beginning with Agazzari (whom Praetorius quotes word for word!), by way of Heinrich Schütz (Musikakische Exequien), to Brossard, Mattheson, Eisel etc. All reference works of the time agree that the VIOLONE is a double-bass instrument of 16-ft pitch. The allusion to William S. Newman demonstrates the uncertainty of the opposite theory which cannot be supported by any contemporary evidence. Newman maintains too, for instance, that the violone part in the D major sonata for viola da gamba, violone and thorough-bass by D. Buxtehude is written "in the 'cello range", but he overlooks the fact that in those days there was a violone tuned D, G, C, E, A, d — that is to say corresponding precisely with the range (D-e) of the violone part in the sonata.
2. "Several varieties of 'cello existed at this time". In fact there were only the "small" and the "large" violoncello, with no significant variations with respect to either size or tuning. On the other hand Rühlmann reports that in the seventeenth century there were *nine* bowed basses in the *viol* family, going up to *twice* the size and with at least a dozen different tunings. Since the limited tuning range of the *bass violin* is adequately documented this must be the first time that a theory of "several varieties of 'cello" has been formulated. Matteson names "three types," but leaves no doubt that they must all have had the same tuning, because the stringing is not mentioned at all. At that time the 'cello could still be played, like the viola, *da braccio* (i. e., "on the arm"), and so it clearly follows that it was less well suited for playing a thorough-bass part than for an intermediate part or the tenor line. The story about "five or possibly six strings" can be traced back, incidentally, to Brossard and the latest 'cello research (K. Marx) tends to reject it as a mis-interpretation.

3. "Naturally, an instrument playing a 16-ft pitch would totally upset the delicate balance of a small ensemble." This curious view must be regarded as the author's personal opinion. It is all the more disappointing in view of the fact that great efforts are being made in Europe nowadays to reconstruct the authentic sound of old music and to use the original instrumentation for performances. If the *composers* did not think 16-ft pitch would upset the balance of a small ensemble, what right have we *listeners* to pontificate and change the original scoring? There are several pictorial representations which can be quoted as evidence that man-sized viols *were* used in even the smallest ensembles. We should be wary of labeling as "unsuitable" an instrument for which 150 concertos were written as well as three times that number of works of a chamber music character. Above all we should be cautious of doing so because we "think" it is unsuitable without really knowing how wonderful the old VIOLONI really sound.
4. "Quantz is speaking only of the double bass as a member of a full ensemble." This is not correct! On the contrary, it is precisely Quantz who provides confirmation for us that in his days too both "large" and "small" VIOLONI were used (Quantz: "Zu 4 Violinen nehme man eine Bratsche/i.e., Viola/, einen Violoncell und einen Contraviolon von mittelmässiger Grösse /i.e. of medium size/. Zu 8 Violinen . . . einen etwas grösseren /i.e., a somewhat larger/VIOLON"). No mention is made here of differences within the violoncelli!
5. "Other (?) evidences exist which point toward the use of a 'cello (or at least a substitute) when the word 'violone' is indicated . . ." This is a reference to the confusion in terminology for bass bowed string instruments as used by Italian composers at the end of the seventeenth century. It is exactly these differences which prove that VIOLON- could not have been identical with -CELLO!
6. "'Bassetto' refers to a small bass, probably some sort of 'cello." Read Leopold Mozart's "Violinschule": "Bassetto = Violoucello."
7. Why should the Balletti by Andrea Grassi "specify an instrument of 8-ft pitch?" They are for "due violine e violone . . ." and not for violoncello at all. Do not forget: there were several VIOLONI (including, certainly, an 8-ft instrument) but all of them were tuned in FOURTHS (the violon-

cello is normally tuned in FIFTHS), and they were played UNDERHAND (i.e. using the same way of holding the bow as when playing a viola da gamba).

8. "The violone as double bass infrequently appears in the trio sonata literature. When it does, the violoncello is generally present to play the bass pitch." This statement is in contradiction to musical practice. During the period in question (ca 1700) one finds practically all combinations of bass instruments: violoncello e gamba / violone o fagotto / violone o organo / violoncello o fagotto / etc. But one will probably never find directions for: VIOLONE e CONTRABASSO (sic.). And it is precisely the sonata by Bernardi (1692) for "violoncello col violone", quoted by you, which proves that in the other pieces the violone has been played alone.

9. Muffat confirms the definition: VIOLONE = CONTRABASSO.

In conclusion I would like to point out that in the nineteenth century in Europe efforts were also made to misrepresent the sound of the violone by publishing transcriptions described as "Music for Violoncello" (c.f., Schubert's "Trout Quintet" scored for *two violincelli*!). We must be cautious, with our present-day ears, about pronouncing judgment on music of earlier centuries. Violoncello and double-bass are worlds apart. We are now living in an age which is capable to only a limited extent of recreating the sounds of former times. Our concern must be to maintain *historical accuracy* wherever possible.

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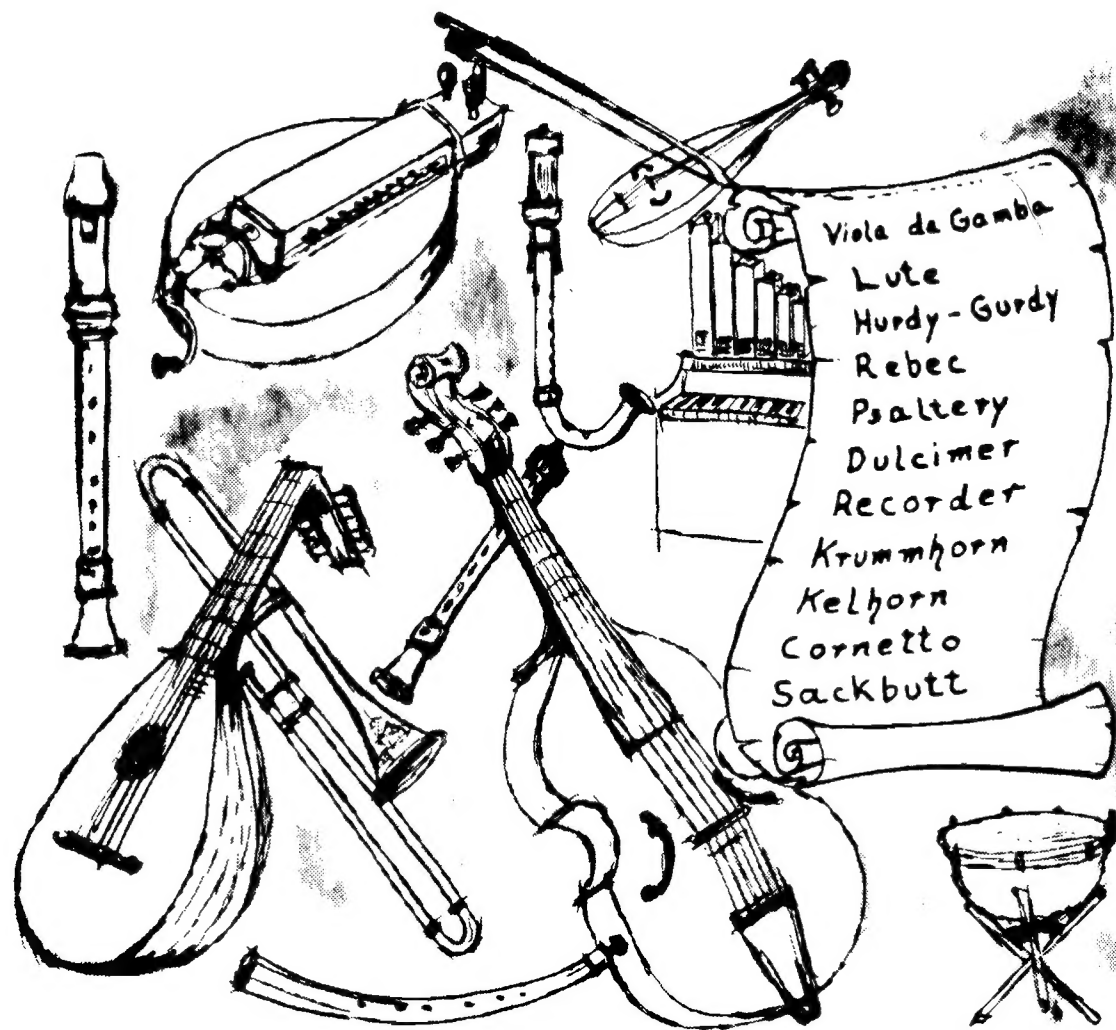




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